ENTERTAINMENT / F2

Richard Gomez is giving Christmas gifts he himself crafted

BUSINESS / B1

Exports surged 15.5% to $4.2B in October

NEWS/ A12

Japan minister bashes RP, says Asean summit here is as good as dead

WORLD / A29

Annan hits US policy in farewell speech

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
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VIOLITO PAYLA celebrates a breakthrough gold medal. Next target: The Olympics. REUTERS

AFTER a silver medal, Antonio Gabica gets to show off a shinier medal. LYN RILLON

BOXING, BILLIARDS

2 golds in Doha

By Ted S. Melendres
Sports Editor

DOHA, QATAR—VIOLITO PAYLA used a double-barreled attack to shame a boastful Thai in boxing's flyweight final and Antonio Gabica won an all-Filipino clash for the 9-ball title in billiards as the Philippines picked up two gold medals in a span of less than 24 hours at the 15th Asian Games.

The 27-year-old Payla sent a taller, flashier Somjit Jongjohor to his knees in the third round on the way to a masterful 31-15 points win yesterday and an Asiad gold—the Cagayan de Oro fighter's brightest career prize.

"This is the best day of my career," said Payla, who had never beaten the Thai in their three previous meetings. "This is the sweetest victory because it is all about revenge."

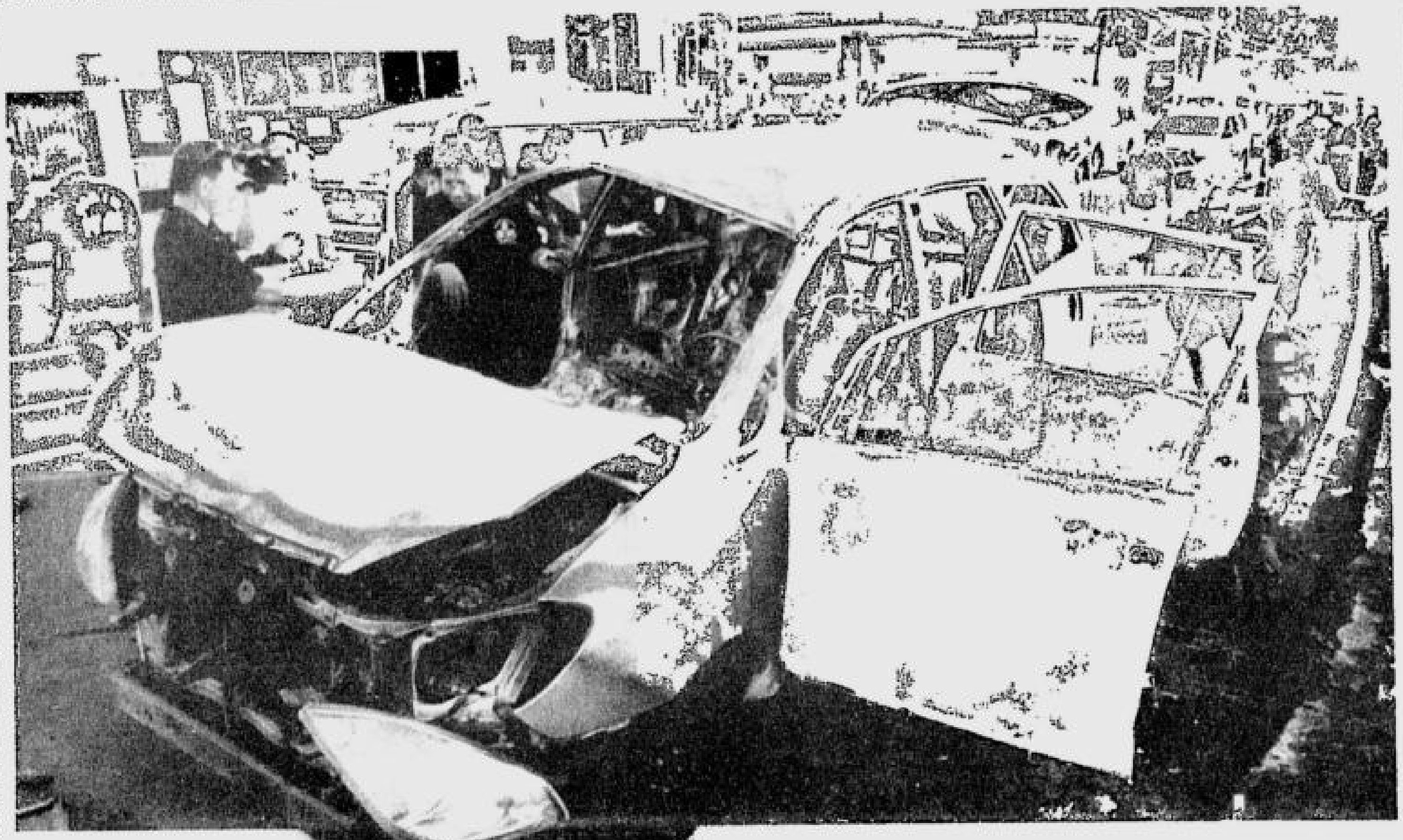
Payla, who had to share with two other Filipino boxers one pair of shorts and shirt on his way to the finals, said his next target would be to win the Olympic gold medal for the Philippines in 2008.

"I want to go to Beijing and take the title," he said. Hopefully, he would have his own boxing shorts and shirt by then.

Gabica, playing pressure-free despite losing the 8-ball gold the night before, actually ended the RP contingent's long wait for the gold Monday night by besting teammate Jeffrey de Luna for the 9-ball championship. *(See related story on Page A24.)*

Filipino-American ace Cecil Mamiit also ended a 40-year

2 GOLDS/ A23



HARD TO BELIEVE but no one died inside this total wreck. Pasig City Rep. Robert Jaworski, his brother Ryan and a bodyguard were inside this Toyota Innova van when it exploded and burned along the northbound lane of C5 in Barrio Ugong, Pasig. They jumped out before the explosion could do its worst. RYAN LIM

Jaworski car explodes; Pasig solon safe

DODOT JAWORSKI: It has to do with politics or drugs.

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr. and Michael Lim Ubac

TEN PERSONAL BODYGUARDS ON board two vans closely followed the 6-month-old Silver Toyota Innova carrying Rep. Robert "Dodot" Jaworski who had just attended a wake of a barangay leader. Then he heard a "bang" and saw smoke seeping into his van.

The Pasig City congressman scrambled out of his vehicle, along with his brother Ryan, 31, who was driving it, and bodyguard Romy Gamosa, 47.

Moments later, the car exploded and burst into flames.

"I suspect it has to do with politics or drugs," said the 35-year-old Jaworski. "I have waged a head-on fight against drug lords, and they want me dead."

Ryan told reporters Jaworski had long been receiving death threats.

"He would receive phone calls warning him he would be killed," Ryan said.

The threats reportedly began after Jaworski started issuing statements condemning the compound of shabu restaurants police uncovered in Pasig City, near City Hall, in February.

Ryan said his brother did not have any enemies except in politics.

Jaworski is running against Mayor Vicente Eusebio's son Bobby next year.

Asked for comment, the young Eusebio told the INQUIRER: "We are asking the police to investigate what really happened ... Blaming politics for what happened is a convenient excuse."

Mincing no words, Speaker Jose de Venecia, surrounded by some congressional leaders, branded the incident as an "assassination."

The Speaker called on the justice

JAWORSKI / A6

Rights lawyer, Bayan Muna member killed

By Bobby Q. Labalan
Inquirer Southern Luzon

GUBAT, SORSOGON—HUMAN rights lawyer Gil Gojol had just attended a court hearing and was inside a van when men on motorcycles gunned him down. Bayan Muna member Cisanto Frivaldo was at home when two men burst in and shot him dead.

The murder of Gojol yesterday and that of Frivaldo on Monday were the latest in a long series of seemingly unstoppable killings of militants since President Macapagal-Arroyo took office in 2001, leftwing groups said.

Both killings occurred in Sorsogon, among the Bicol provinces recently hit by successive typhoons.

Militants immediately blamed the killings on military "death squads." Police have not detained any suspects.

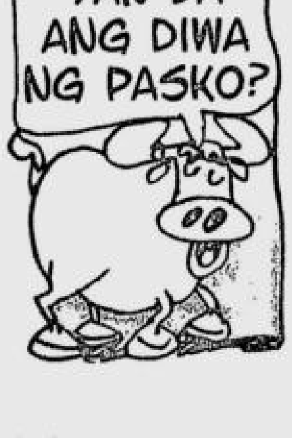
The two murders brought to 262 the number of militants or activists killed since President Macapagal-Arroyo took office in 2001, according to INQUIRER records. Some human rights groups have put the number of political killings at more than 700.

Foreign governments, including the Philippines' allies in the European Union, as well as the

RIGHTS LAWYER/ A21

CA justices accused of playing Scrooge

By Armand N. Nocum


YAN BA ANG DIWA NG PASKO?

COURT OF APPEALS JUSTICES LED BY Presiding Justice Ruben Reyes are being accused of playing Scrooge for allegedly slashing the P20,000 in "traditional Christmas grocery allowance" due each employee to P6,000 so that the justices could buy eight new cars.

But Reyes is crying foul over the complaint of some court employees, saying that he had even given up his right to get a luxury car that a justice of his stature deserves.

CA JUSTICES/ A6

Cory to join Dec. 17 rally at Luneta

THE ICON OF FILIPINO PEOPLE Power yesterday said she would take part in the Church-led prayer rally on Dec. 17 to protest the Palace-backed move by administration congressmen, since withdrawn, to amend the 1987 Charter through a constituent assembly (Con-ass).

In a brief statement, former President Corazon Aquino also called on the people to join the rally at the Rizal Park and ask God to enlighten the lawmakers.

"I will join the prayer rally on Sunday at the Luneta to express my moral outrage at the attempt of administration congressmen to foist their processed idea of Charter change upon the nation by turning Congress into a constituent assembly," Aquino said.

"I share the view that Charter change is a serious undertaking that would need careful and widespread deliberation not only by our lawmakers but [also] by the citizenry they represent," she said.

Two more Roman Catholic leaders—Bishop Socrates Ville-

CORY TO JOIN/ A4

Sex-abused child now rights crusader honored

By Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—TEN years ago when she was a 12-year-old street child, her court testimony sent to prison two foreigners who had sexually abused her and another girl her age.

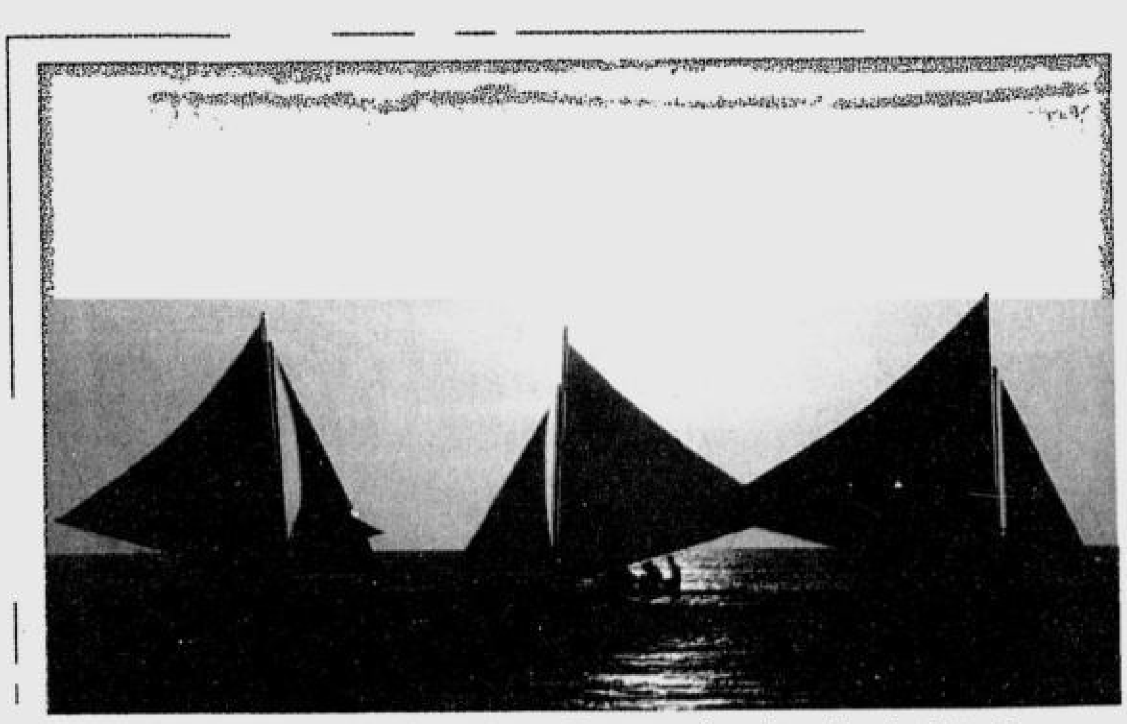
Since then, Pia Corvera has not stopped fighting for children's rights—and continues to reap recognition for her mission.

The latest feather in her cap is the Woman's Opportunity Award from the Soroptimist International of Tokyo-Ginza in Japan.

"Hindi ako makapaniwala (I couldn't believe it)," Corvera told the INQUIRER by phone from Olongapo City on Saturday.

She said awards—and success—were farthest from her

SEX-ABUSED/ A10



THE CALM AFTER THE STORM descends upon Boracay, and tourists on Tuesday hie to the sailboats to drink it all in, the serenity of the sea, the splendor of the setting sun, all that and the clarity of the heavens, too. DARREN WHITESIDE/REUTERS

Senate OKs Con-con but there's no rush

By TJ Burgonio

SHOWING NO SIGNS OF SOFTening on their hardline stance, senators yesterday declared that they would consider convening a constitutional convention (Con-con) to amend the Charter only after the May 2007 elections.

Until that time, the Senate would not be rushed by the House of Representatives into approving a resolution calling for a Con-con or passing a special budget for it, they said.

Echoing the view of legal experts, Senate President Manuel Villar Jr. said the election of Con-con delegates could be

SENATE/ A4

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Northern and Eastern Luzon will have cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to cloudy with isolated rainshowers and thunderstorms.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: KATE PEDROSO, INQUIRER RESEARCH/12/12/06

Metro Manila	Cloudy with Rains	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Cloudy with Rains	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Cloudy with Rains	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Cloudy with Rains	Gen. Santos	Partly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Cloudy with Rains	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Partly Cloudy
Calapan	Cloudy with Rains	Davao	Partly Cloudy

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Second FrontPage

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People's initiative is dead, SC rules

By Armand N. Nocum

THE PETITION FOR A PEOPLE'S INITIATIVE TO change the Constitution is dead and buried.

The Supreme Court yesterday junked a second motion asking the high court to reconsider and reverse its Oct. 25 decision dismissing the petition from the Sigaw ng Bayan and Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines (Ulap) calling for amendments to the Constitution through a people's initiative.

Sitting for the first en banc session under new Chief Justice Reynato S. Puno, the tribunal ruled to deny the second motion filed by petitioner Bohol Gov. Erico B. Aumentado on the ground that "a second motion for reconsideration is a prohibited pleading" under the amended Rules of Civil Procedure.

"No further pleadings on the case will be entertained," the court said in a statement issued by Ismael Khan of the public information office.

According to the court, the Aumentado motion was a mere rehash of the first motion for reconsideration that the tribunal had denied with finality on Nov. 21.

In his motion, Aumentado sought further clarification from the tribunal on what kind of constitutional amendments or revisions could be allowed through a people's initiative.

He also asked the high court to categorically state whether it had abandoned its 1997 ruling in *Santiago vs. Comelec*, when it stated in its Nov. 21 ruling that 10 justices had declared that the Referendum and Initiative Act, RA 6735, was sufficient and adequate to allow a system of initiative to amend the Constitution.

In that 1997 case that Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago brought against the Comelec, the SC declared that RA 6735 that was being invoked to justify the drive for a people's initiative was insufficient as an enabling law for proceeding with Charter change via initiative or referendum.

In its Oct. 25 ruling, the tribunal, by a vote of 8-7, dismissed the people's initiative petition filed by Sigaw ng Bayan and Ulap for failing to comply with the constitutional and legal requirement to fully explain the proposed amendments to the signatories.

In its Nov. 21 resolution, the high tribunal denied with finality the motions for reconsideration of its Oct. 25 decision.

The high court held that the basic issues raised had already been duly passed upon and that no substantial arguments were presented to warrant the reversal of the decision.

HK pop star sends Pinay maid to jail

CHEUNG

HONG KONG—A FILIPINO MAID WHO worked for Hong Kong pop star Jacky Cheung has been jailed for six months for stealing three photographs and a letter from her former employer, court documents showed yesterday.

Preslyn-saga Catacutan, 30, said she took the items to keep as souvenirs because she was a fan of the 45-year-old star.

She was sentenced Monday to two six-month terms on two theft charges, to be served concurrently, according to court documents.

Migrant workers' organizations in Hong Kong criticized the sentence as too harsh and unreasonable.

"It's very cruel," said Cynthia Tellez, director of the Mission for Migrant Workers.

"With that kind of case, from our point of view, it's a bit ridiculous," said Eman Villanueva, secretary general of United Filipinos in Hong Kong.

The Ming Pao Daily News newspaper quoted judge Winston Leung as saying he imposed a heavy sentence as a deterrent because he suspected Catacutan of wanting to sell the photos.

"Common sense directed that the celebrity's personal items can be of high value," he told the court, a report in the "South China Morning Post" newspaper said.

"Celebrities are prone to such betrayal," said Leung.

The Apple Daily newspaper quoted Leung as saying Catacutan had betrayed Cheung's trust.

The photos reportedly included pictures of Cheung and his wife, retired actress May Lo, as well as Lo and a friend, and Lo's passport photo.

Apple Daily said Catacutan's lawyer, pleading for a fine instead of a prison sentence, said the maid's conviction prevents her from working in Hong Kong again and therefore already serves as punishment.

Cheung reportedly discovered the theft after being tipped off by another maid. The photos were found in Catacutan's jeans pocket, reports said.

Tellez alleged Cheung deprived Catacutan of her and her family's livelihood. Filipino maids usually work in wealthy Hong Kong to support their families back home.

"She has a [criminal] record for life. That's too cruel for them to have done that. He [Cheung] could have just terminated her if he didn't think she's fit [for the job]," she said.

It wasn't immediately clear if Catacutan plans to appeal.

A spokeswoman for Cheung said the government, not Cheung, prosecuted the maid. The spokeswoman, surnamed Chu, declined to give her full name.

"We respect the court's ruling," she said.

Cheung is one of Hong Kong's biggest Chinese pop music stars, rising to fame in the mid-1980s to become one of the so-called "Heavenly Kings of Song" along with fellow stars Aaron Kwok, Andy Lau and Leon Lai.

Like most Hong Kong stars, Cheung has been packaged as an all-around entertainer, starring in a number of hit local movies as well as singing Cantopop, a hybrid of Chinese ballads and Western pop.

Nearly 233,000 foreign maids work in prosperous Hong Kong. Most are from the Philippines, with smaller numbers coming from Indonesia, Thailand and other countries. *AP and AFP*

Bicol relief puts on hold court-martial of 30 officers

By Dona Pazzibugan
and Armand N. Nocum

THE COURT-MARTIAL OF 30 offficers accused of participating in the failed coup plot last February has been put on hold as the military is busy with rescue and relief operations in the typhoon-ravaged Bicol region.

Lt. Gen. Alexander Yano, chief of the Armed Forces Southern Luzon Command (Solcom), is giving priority to helping the victims of the killer mudslides around Mayon Volcano in Albay province, his area of responsibility.

Yano has been designated court president of the seven-man general court-martial panel that will try the 30 accused officers led by former Marine commandant Maj. Gen. Renato Miranda, former Scout Ranger commander Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim and Marine Col. Ariel Querubin.

The 30 officers who belong to the elite Marines and the Army First Scout Ranger Regiment are charged with mutiny and conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman for allegedly planning to bring down the government by withdrawing support from President Macapagal-Arroyo last Feb. 24.

Eight other officers who were similarly implicated were cleared by AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr., who ordered the court-martial last Nov. 21.

The members of the court-martial panel were announced last Nov. 24, but before they could convene disaster struck in Southern Luzon, with mudslides caused by typhoon "Reming" burying entire villages in Albay province last Nov. 30.

"They were planning to meet to arrange the schedule [for the trial]. Unfortunately, this disaster happened," said Lt. Col. Bartolome Bacarro, the AFP public information office chief.

He said Yano would convene the general court-martial "when things have sort of normalized."

QUERUBIN

Meanwhile, Querubin yesterday asked the Court of Appeals to stop the Armed Forces from subjecting him to a court-martial.

Querubin branded as a "kangaroo court" the special general court-martial created by Esperon to try him and 29 other co-accused.

In his petition, Querubin said his detention was illegal as the panel which conducted the pre-trial proceedings on the case had recommended that the mutiny charges against him and his co-accused be dropped.

He said Esperon failed to observe due process when he ordered the court-martial despite the findings of the pre-trial panel.

He also accused Esperon of making a "biased pre-judgment" on the case before and during the period of the pre-trial investigation.

The other members of the court-martial panel are Rear Admiral Emilio Marayag, Commodore Fortunato Sagudo Jr., Brig. Gen. Raul Caballes, Brig. Gen. Salvador Collantes, Brig. Gen. Rolando Capacia and Col. Marian Aliedo.

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Arroyos rarin' to fight, but Cayetano's a no-show

By Philip C. Tubeza

FIRST GENTLEMAN JOSE MIGUEL "Mike" Arroyo and his sons were at the House yesterday ready for a confrontation with opposition Rep. Alan Peter Cayetano whose expulsion from Congress the Arroyos are seeking.

But Cayetano was a no-show at the House ethics committee hearing, having gone to the opposition rally against Charter change.

"Cross-examine now. We've spent too much time already. Let's get this over with. Let us not wait," said Mike Arroyo who with sons Pampanga Rep. Juan Miguel Arroyo and Diosdado Arroyo yesterday swore and affirmed their complaint affidavits against Cayetano.

The Arroyos filed an expulsion case against Cayetano for alleging that a member of the First Family was maintaining a German bank deposit containing millions of dollars.

Cayetano will get another chance to directly cross-examine the First Gentleman and other members of the First Family at the next House ethics committee hearing next Tuesday.

Joel Montales, Cayetano's lawyer, asked for more time to prepare their evidence and for the cross-examination.

He said his client received the the notice that the committee was going to proceed to the "investigation proper" only on Dec. 6.

He said Cayetano would also formally ask the committee to reconsider its Dec. 5 ruling rejecting his motion to defer the hearing, issue subpoenas for witnesses and documents, and for the committee to reconsider its decision that it had jurisdiction over the case.

The Arroyo camp accused Cayetano of deliberately delaying the case, adding that the lawmaker had claimed when he exposed the alleged German bank account that he already had the evidence to back up his claim.

"I personally always felt that his strategy was to delay and this only proves it. You heard the whole session and [his side] gave nothing of substance. We categorically asked if they wanted to cross-examine but they avoided the question," said Roy Rondain, the First Gentleman's lawyer.

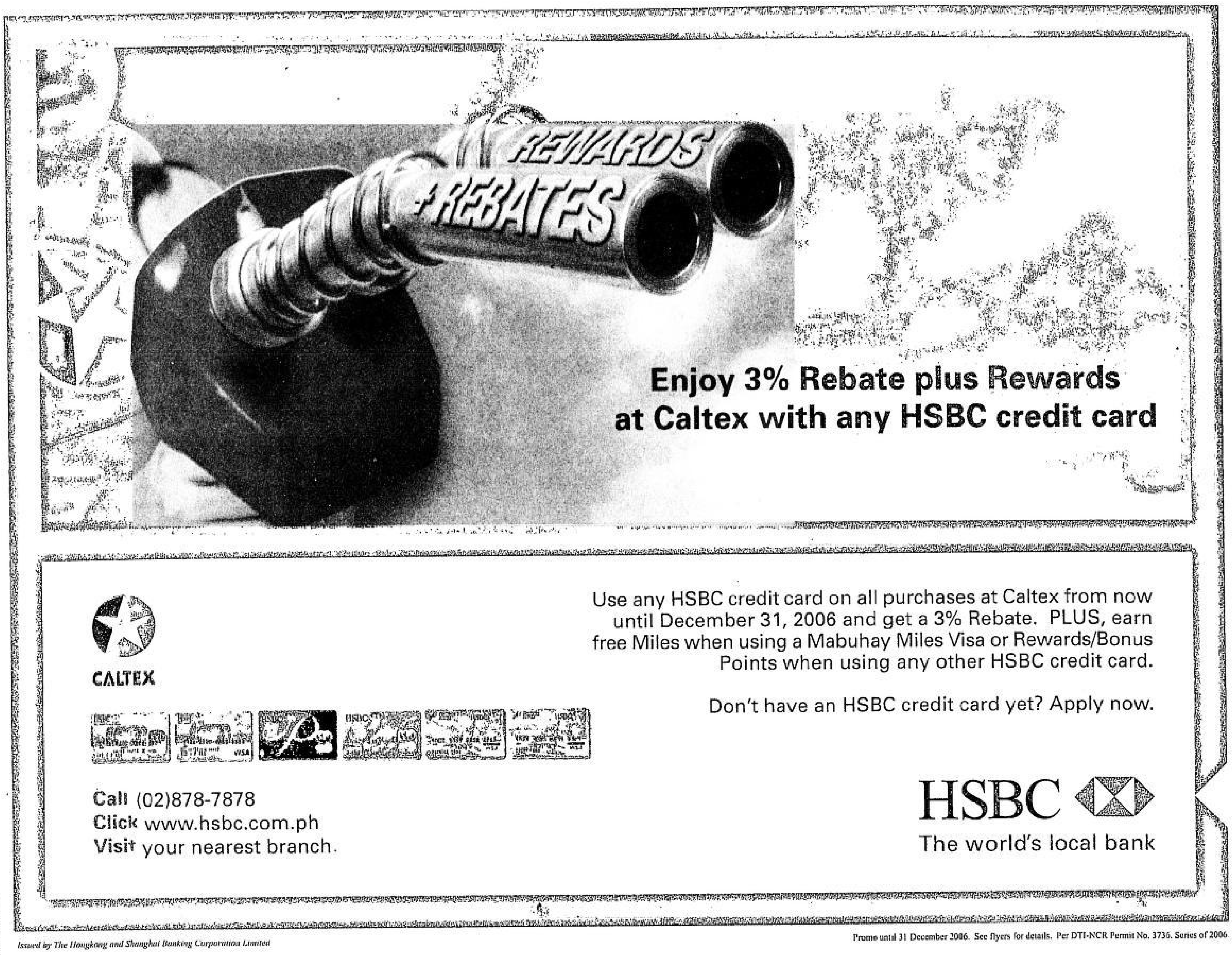
"We were prepared. We've been prepared since last week. [Cayetano] said he would cross-examine but as to when he will cross, that's what eludes me up to this time," he said.

Rondain said the committee might just consider the case submitted for resolution if Cayetano waives his right to cross-examine the Arroyos. He said the parties would just submit their memos.

"I think that's fair enough. This has been going on for too long," Rondain said.

Cayetano said he skipped the hearing to show President Macapagal-Arroyo and the First Gentleman that "their harassment will not affect our protest and criticism of this government and its brazen tactics."

"It should be PGMA and FG on trial, not me," he said.



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PAASI

AFP chief raps bishop instigating soldiers to join rallies

ARMED FORCES CHIEF OF STAFF Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr. yesterday rebuked a Catholic bishop for calling on the military to join protest actions against Charter change.

He said the AFP had pressing matters to attend to, chiefly the ongoing operations against internal security threats and lately the relief operations for typhoon victims in Southern Luzon.

Esperon found a need to issue a statement after Novaliches Bishop Antonio Tobias called on soldiers in a homily to fulfill their duty to defend the Constitution by joining the Church-led prayer rally on Dec. 17.

"I join all the soldiers on the ground or frontlines in asking those who are calling for us to go to the streets in protest of the issues relative to the Constitution not to drag the soldiers into participating in partisan politics," Esperon said in the statement issued in Palawan, where he inspected units of the AFP Western Command.

In an interview with dzXL radio, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said soldiers and policemen should stick to their job of defending the people.

"It's not proper for the uniformed force to get involved in such activities [as protest actions]," Ermita said in Filipino.

He hinted that men in uniform seen joining the rally could suffer the same fate as the soldiers under court-martial for participation in the aborted attempt to oust President Macapagal-Arroyo in February.

ESPERON: No, thanks.

TOBIAS invites soldiers.

'Political demagoguery'

At the House, administration congressmen called on the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines to censure Tobias for "engaging in political demagoguery."

Nationalist People's Coalition Representatives Douglas Cagas (Davao del Sur) and Eduardo Veloso (Leyte) said Tobias' "constant political message of divisiveness and hate" was in contrast to the message of hope and peace for Christmas, and amounted to inciting to sedition.

They said the bishop had "perennially dipped his hands in partisan politics in the service of anti-administration politicians," and now "wanted them smeared in blood by seeking to incite the soldiers of the republic into open revolt."

Tobias, an outspoken critic of the Arroyo administration, said on Monday that the 1987 Constitution was being "ravaged by the interest of private individuals."

"Maybe it's time for the soldiers ... sworn to defend the people and the Constitution to listen and join the people," he said. *Reports from Dona Z. Pazzibugan, Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Philip C. Tubeza*

Cory to join Dec. 17 rally at Luneta

From page A1

gas of Balanga, Bataan, and Bishop Emeritus Ted Bacani of Caloocan—have spoken out against the continuing effort at Charter change (Cha-cha), this time through a constitutional convention (Con-con).

"The primary proof of corrupt governance is the continuous insistence on changing the Constitution," Villegas said in Filipino in a pastoral statement released to his diocese yesterday afternoon.

"The problem that bears heaviest on our country is not the lack of food and jobs, terrorism, or the string of typhoons. It's the corrupt politicians and a government with no semblance of decency," Villegas said.

Bacani called on the people not to "let your guard down" even if administration lawmakers appeared to have scrapped the Con-ass.

"We all know that most of our leaders are abusive. Given the opportunity, they will lunge at it for their own benefit," he said in Filipino in an interview at the Church-run Radio Veritas.

BAYAN MUNA
NG MASA
NO TO CHA-CHA!
OUST GL

NOT SO FAST: Even as Con-ass proponents led by the House administration majority and the Palace have quit their Cha-cha show—for now at least, thousands of militants marching on Commonwealth Avenue won't let them get away just yet. But they are blocked by cops. RYAN LIM

Hasty, suspicious effort

Villegas said it was obvious that the House majority's efforts to amend the Charter preparatory to a shift to the unicameral parliamentary system was self-serving.

He urged his parishioners to carefully study key social issues, including Cha-cha.

"One with the CBCP (Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines) and other groups, we stand firm in opposing the hasty and suspicious effort to change the Constitution," Villegas said, adding:

"The Constitution should be spared from dirty politics."

Bacani said Filipinos should remain vigilant because this was "the price of freedom."

With five months remaining before the midterm elections, he urged the people to keep in mind recent political developments, particularly the politicians aggressively pushing Cha-cha.

He said Filipinos could even keep a list of the House members who had voted in favor of the Con-ass resolution.

Corruption

Villegas said he was not buying the argument that much of the problems in the Philippine system could be traced to a number of constitutional provisions.

"Corruption is not the handiwork of the Constitution," he argued. "It can be done only by man. It's man who should change. It's man, not the Constitution, that is at fault."

Lingayen-Dagupan Archbishop Oscar Cruz called on the faithful in Pangasinan to gather for a prayer rally in Dagupan City on Friday, to protest the "hasty and manipulative way" by which Cha-cha was being pursued.

Cruz said representatives of his archdiocese's parishes and youth and civic groups would convene at the St. John Cathedral yard at 1 p.m. on Friday and march to the city plaza.

"We aim to show the people's reaction to recent events, such as the passage of the Con-ass resolution by the House and the planned constitutional convention," he said.

But since the Con-ass has been shelved, "we will focus on the Con-con," he said. "What is [the Con-con]? Do we want it? When do we want it? These are the issues that we will discuss during the rally," he said.

4,300 cops

As many as 4,300 policemen will be deployed for the Sunday prayer rally, according to Director Reynaldo Varilla, chief of the National Capital Region Police Office.

Varilla also said any person making seditious remarks during any of the anti-Cha-cha rallies would be arrested.

"We are always ready and we have raised the preparation level for the rallies and demonstrations. We will strictly enforce BP (Batas Pambansa) No. 880—the no permit, no rally policy," he told reporters in Camp Crame.

Varilla said he would tolerate "freedom of expression" but not statements "inciting to sedition or rebellion."

Asked if the lay leaders and bishops who had organized the protest rally would be arrested if they violated this warning, he said: "We'll see."

"The religious or whoever have the right to free expression as long as they don't incite to sedition or rebellion. If they break the law, you know what we will do: We will arrest them," he said.

Varilla met yesterday with rally organizers, including leaders of militant groups and the religious, "to touch base."

He said an agreement had been forged to ensure that the rally would be "peaceful."

"It will basically be a prayer rally with a Mass. There should be no political or inflammatory speeches," Varilla said.

He said he had been assured that the demonstrators would converge at certain points, such as the Liwasang Bonifacio, and march to Rizal Park, and that they would disperse peacefully afterward.

"There will be no streamers and no banners," he said.

Fruitful but doubtful

Renato Reyes, secretary general of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan), said no one from his camp would be inciting to sedition.

"Our call is for the administration to stop Charter change whether in the form of a Con-ass or a Con-con," he said.

Reyes said that while the meeting with Varilla was "fruitful," he doubted that the points of agreement "would be followed on the ground."

He said militant groups who held an anti-Cha-cha rally earlier yesterday in Quezon City had been assured by police officials that they would be allowed to approach the Batasang Pambansa compound, but were blocked at the corner of Batasan Road and Commonwealth Avenue.

Varilla countered that the demonstrators were only allowed to hold their rally at the St. Peter's Church on Commonwealth.

The Quezon City police chief, Senior Supt. Magtanggol Gatdula, also said all applications for a rally permit had been disapproved by the local government.

No. 1 reason

Thousands of marchers from organizations allied with Bayan and Laban ng Masa (LnM) had gathered in front of the St. Peter's Church before moving toward the Batasan complex.

"They still don't get it," Reyes said. "The Arroyo-De Venecia Con-con option will surely meet the fate of the illegal Con-ass they have temporarily placed on the backburner."

Reyes said recent developments merely showed how the Palace-House combine was "arrogantly defying the people's resounding rejection of their Cha-cha."

He said President Macapagal-Arroyo was "the No. 1 reason why people oppose Charter change."

"No sugar-coated method can change this perception of the people," he said.

Laban ng Masa said Charter change under the Arroyo administration, whether through a people's initiative, a Con-ass, or a Con-con, was unacceptable.

"[Ms Arroyo] will fight tooth and nail to dance the Cha-cha in spite of her obvious ineptness for leading the Filipino people toward the right direction—a direction that will be responsive to what the people need to survive," said the Freedom from Debt Coalition, one of the groups under the LnM. *Reports from Cynthia D. Balana, Christian V. Esguerra, Alcuin Papa and Norman Bordadora in Manila, and Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes, Inquirer Northern Luzon*

Senate OKs Con-con but it can wait until after election

From page A1

timed with the October 2007 barangay elections because by that time this mode and the proposed Charter change (Cha-cha) would have been thoroughly discussed.

"If we do it in October, it could be said that this was thoroughly studied, and not forced," Villar said in an interview over dzAR.

Administration Sen. Ralph Recto said the Senate and House "should close down their respective Cha-cha shows ... so the nation can achieve closure on the divisive issue before Christmas. If this is heading nowhere, maybe it's time to stop the charade," he said.

"By calling off Cha-cha, people against it will be forced to call off rallies against an issue which has ceased to exist," Recto said, referring to a multisectoral rally on Sunday led by Catholic bishops, the Iglesia ni Cristo, Bro. Mike Velarde's El Shaddai, Protestant Bishop Benny Abante and several Metro Manila mayors.

Speaker Jose de Venecia said the House was not in a hurry to do a Con-con in the same fashion that the resolution to call a constituent assembly was pushed through in the dead of night last week during a rowdy 12-hour plenary.

"They accuse us of railroading the convening of a constituent assembly, now we're taking our own sweet time," De Venecia said.

"We will not go on another wild goose chase. It's not proper to waste our time and resource (without the Senate's cooperation)."

On Monday, De Venecia announced that the majority was ditching Con-ass in favor of Con-con to amend the Constitution preparatory to a shift to a unicameral parliamentary form of government.

This came two days after De Venecia bared the sharp shift in the mode of amending the Charter from Con-ass to Con-con and issued a 72-hour deadline to senators to pass a Con-con resolution, or else the congressmen would press ahead with convening a House-only Con-ass in plenary this week.

Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan agreed with Villar and maintained that senators were open to discussing proposals to rewrite the 19-year-old Charter "after our people have elected a fresh mandate into office."

No synchronized polls

Pangilinan also objected to the synchronized holding of next year's midterm polls and the election of Con-con delegates, arguing that the election of at least two delegates from each congressional district would not only be costly, but would also get muddled by local politics.

"A separate election for the constitutional convention delegates and a separate debate long after the May 2007 elections might be better," he said.

Both Villar and Pangilinan are eyeing reelection in 2007.

At Monday's Senate hearing on constitutional amendments, retired Associate Justice Vicente Mendoza and Fr. Joaquin Bernas of the Ateneo de Manila University School of Law said there was no urgency to amend the 1987 Charter at a time of "partisan strife."

Any referendum on whether the people favored Charter change should be held simultaneously with next year's midterm elections or with the 2010 elections, Mendoza and Bernas said.

Emerging from the bicameral conference committee on the P1.126-trillion proposed 2007 national budget, finance committee chair Sen. Franklin Drilon said there was no item in the budget for a Con-con.

No special budget

"The NEP (national expenditure program) does not provide for a Con-con expense. Considering it could be substantial if and when Congress would decide on the Con-con, there will have to be a special budget for that," Drilon said.

Much as it would not be rushed into passing a Con-con resolution, the Senate would not be stampeded into approving any budget for Con-con, Villar said.

"We believe that amending the Constitution isn't a matter of life and death. We've been using it for nearly 20 years," he said.

This early, Senators Edgardo Angara and Panfilo Lacson predicted that Con-con would suffer the fate of Con-ass, saying that they doubted if congressmen could get the support of two-thirds of the senators.

"We may agree to the proposal but we certainly weigh very carefully the timing of the proposal ... There's absolutely no sense to pushing it before the elections," Angara said on ABS-CBN News Channel, stressing that this would not get the backing of most senators.

Apart from the tough task of getting senators' backing, Lacson said that De Venecia and the administration congressmen had to overcome "high public distrust" in the personalities behind such a move.

Appointment

The President's lawyer, Romulo Macalintal, yesterday proposed in a letter to De Venecia the appointment of Con-con delegates to avoid expenses. He said this would also "not be divisive as compared to an election."

Macalintal proposed that in passing the bill for Con-con, Congress may authorize "somebody" to make such appointments with all political parties allowed to nominate delegates based on the parties' representation in Congress.

The Constitution neither provides that Con-con delegates be elected nor prohibits their appointment, he said.

The 1987 Constitution was drafted by delegates appointed by the revolutionary government of Corazon Aquino following the Edsa People Power Revolution that ousted the dictator Ferdinand Marcos in 1986.

"If the delegates are appointed, we are at least sure of the qualifications and competence of those who would be appointed, rather than having delegates who might be elected only by mere popularity," Macalintal said.

Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya Jr. earlier said a Con-con could cost the government around P10 billion.

Ulap still at it

Also yesterday, the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines (Ulap) said it could back another people's initiative to change the Constitution with at least 4.6 million signatures it could gather nationwide in just five days.

Eastern Samar Gov. Ben Evardone, Ulap public relations officer, said local executives were seriously considering another go at the initiative process in the wake of the House's junking of Con-ass and the Senate's rejection of a Con-con at this time.

In October, the Supreme Court declared illegal the people's initiative as a mode of revising the Constitution. *With reports from Michael Lim Ubac, Jerome Aning, Norman Bordadora and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.*

UN exec backs RP on Milk Code

By Volt Contreras

THE UNITED NATIONS Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food has lauded the Philippine government for promoting breastfeeding and regulating the marketing of infant formula, the Department of Foreign Affairs reported yesterday.

A critic of globalization, Swiss-born Jean Ziegler encouraged Filipinos to "stay the course," saying the government's Milk Code both protects the rights and improves the lives of millions of Filipino children.

The human rights investigator was the latest in a string of international groups and personalities who have congratulated the country on its revised Milk Code, which has drawn complaints from the Chamber of Commerce of the United States.

Consequences

Last August, chamber president Thomas Donahue wrote President Macapagal-Arroyo, warning that the law's implementing rules and regulations (IRR) would have "unintended negative consequences for investors' confidence in the predictability of business law in the Philippines."

The IRR put limits on the marketing of milk formula products by making it a requirement for companies to put health warnings on product labels.

Health Secretary Francisco Duque III, whose department drafted the new IRR, described the letter as a form of "pressure" and "subtle blackmail" from "big business."

Ziegler conveyed his support in a letter to Ambassador Enrique Manalo, the country's permanent representative to the UN in Geneva.

"I wish to congratulate (the Philippine government) for adopting the new IRR aimed at restricting those marketing practices promoting sales of formula milk for infants," he wrote.

Infant survival

"Human milk is the ideal nourishment for infant's survival, growth and development," he added. "Exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months of life stimulates babies' immune systems and protects them from diarrhea and acute respiratory infections, two of the major causes of infant mortality in the developing world.

Special Rapporteur is a title given to individuals working on behalf of the UN who bear a specific mandate from the former UN Commission on Human Rights. Acting independently of governments, they are tasked to investigate, monitor and recommend solutions to human rights problems.

A sociology professor and former member of the Swiss federal parliament, Ziegler is considered one of the leaders of the anti-economic globalization movement.

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Jaworski car explodes; Pasig solon safe

From page A1

and NBI chiefs to "rapidly conduct an investigation so that we can track down and arrest the assassins—those who would like to kill our young congressman who has been fighting for reforms in his city."

Jaworski thanked the Speaker and his colleagues for their support "at this time when I need it the most."

"Unfortunately, today is a very sad day. I was put in a situation where my life was directly threatened," he said.

"I called the Speaker immediately for advice and guidance on what to do because I was distraught and couldn't think clearly. I have to admit, I was rattled upon seeing my car explode. I asked myself, 'Why did it happen when I have no enemies, except in politics and the drug lords.'"

Jaworski had just just come out of the wake at Barangay Pineda around noon and was in a convoy of three vehicles on C5 Road near the corner of Lanuza Street in front of gasoline station his way home at the posh Valle Verde subdivision in Pasig.

"Suddenly, I heard a bang inside the car and a thick smoke started to come out from the right side of the vehicle," Jaworski said.

The car stopped and the bodyguard pulled Jaworski out of the vehicle, the shaken congressman later recounted to reporters.

"Seconds later—about 10 to 15—my car blew up," said Jaworski who immediately ran away from the burning car.

Warning shots fired

The explosion alarmed his securitymen. One of the 10 guards drew his gun and started firing warning shots in the air, thinking it was an ambush attempt.

"We thought we were already being attacked," security escort Edwin Balanga told the INQUIRER.

Private cars following the convoy panicked after seeing the burning car and hearing the gunshots and drove into the gasoline station, attendants said.

Nobody was injured but the car was a total wreck. Shards of broken glass littered the pavement in Barangay Ugong while the bumper lay crumpled about 20 meters away.

"We are still conducting investigation to determine what caused the explosion," the Eastern Police District director, Chief Supt Luizo Ticman, told reporters.

Bomb caused blast

However, police experts theorized a bomb caused the blast. Describing the car wreckage, they said an explosive device could have been placed on the car's right chassis.

They said the impact rushed from the chassis upward, even dislodging from its place the right front seats.

However, police said that official findings would be released only after laboratory examinations of the crime scene as well as analysis of materials gathered by the bomb data center in Camp Crame have been completed.

Officials brought to their office parts of the car and debris collected from the area for investigation.

WHAT WENT BEFORE

IN FEBRUARY, PASIG REP. Robert "Dodot" Jaworski Jr. filed charges against Mayor Vicente Eusebio for his failure to prevent the operation of a "shabu supermarket" in the city and for demolishing the compound and destroying evidence after police raided it.

Before the Ombudsman, Jaworski accused Eusebio of violating the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act, the Code of Ethics for Public Officials and the Local Government Code.

Jaworski earlier quoted information from the police's Anti-Illegal Drugs Special Operations Task Force that a certain "Pacman" had been collecting money from the drug den on behalf of mayor.

The den in Barangay Sto. Tomas, which reportedly earned about P12 million a day, was less than a kilometer away from the Pasig City Hall and the police headquarters.

Eusebio has denied involvement in the drug operation, saying that with his wealth, he had no need for such activities. He blamed the Pasig police for failing to monitor the drug den which had reportedly been operating for more than a year.

In 2004, Jaworski, then a congressional candidate, and Eusebio's rival for the mayoral post, Henry Lanot, of the Lakas Christian Muslim Democrats asked the Commission on Elections to suspend the holding of polls in the city because the Certified Voters List for Pasig was reportedly padded by 130,000. Eusebio laughed off the allegations.

He later defeated Lanot by 10,752 votes. Lanot, Jaworski's political ally, filed an electoral protest, accusing Eusebio of vote-buying.

In April 2005, Lanot was shot and killed by a man inside a Mandaluyong restaurant as the Supreme Court was hearing his electoral protest. *Cyril L. Bonabente, Inquirer Research*

AN OPEN LETTER TO ALL SENATORS

(FROM THE PEOPLE OF BUKIDNON)

We refer once again to House Bill No. 3312, that seeks to create the Province of Bukidnon del Sur.

We earlier appealed to you all Senators to act on said bill the soonest possible time, and let the people of Bukidnon decide on their own destiny through a plebiscite. However, it would seem that our pleadings have fallen on deaf ears because until now the said bill is still languishing in the Senate dungeon.

We cannot help but wonder why the apparent intentional inaction by the senators on a measure that we consider vital, and would forever change the course of our lives for the better. Why deny us our right to choose which road we would like to travel on? These are our lives, this is our destiny, and this is what we believe is good for us and for the future generation. Did it not ever occur to your minds that we, the inhabitants of the Province of Bukidnon should know better what is best for us? Is it not only proper that the more than 550 thousand voters of our province should decide on this matter, and not only by the 24 senators.

Is politics behind the seeming inaction by the Senate on House Bill 3312? Why did the Senate approve the creation of the Province of Dinagat Islands on August 14, 2006? Why could the Senate not do the same for House Bill 3312? Dinagat Islands is now a province pursuant to R.A. 9355 and composed of only seven (7) towns that were segregated from the mother province of Surigao del Norte. On the other hand, the proposed mother Province of Bukidnon has more resources and much bigger than the Province of Surigao del Norte, hence, if the senators were convinced to create the Province of Dinagat Islands, with more reason(s) that they should be convinced for the creation of the Province of Bukidnon del Sur. Lest they would be accused of being selective.

To add more mystery to the already mysterious inaction by the Senate on H.B. 3312, Senator Jamby Madrigal has filed an eye brow-raising Senate Resolution 564, that calls for an inquiry into the alleged impending displacement of tribal communities in Bukidnon by reason of the proposed creation of the Province of Bukidnon del Sur.

Madam Senator, we believe you are very much aware that there are indigenous people in every nook and corner (cranny) of our country. In the whole island of Mindanao alone, there are at least seven (7) tribal communities that reside and roam our mountains. We also believe that you are very much aware that next to Pangasinan, Bukidnon is the second biggest province that has not been divided up to now. The point is, all the provinces nationwide, especially in Mindanao, that have been divided, there are tribal communities therein, but have not complained of being displaced because of the division of their mother provinces. Madam Senator, it is the logging and mining operations that cause the displacement of our tribal communities, and not the division of a province.

In behalf of the people of Bukidnon, we appeal to the Senate to act on the matter the soonest possible time and let the people of Bukidnon decide their own destiny through a plebiscite.

With utmost respect and hope in our hearts, please heed this call.

Thank you. (Original Document Signed)

DATU RELITO A. GAWILAN
Chieftain
Matigsalog Tribe

LORENZO I. DINLAYAN, JR
Chairman
Provincial Consultative Body

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Board Member
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DATU CONDRADO M. BINAYAO
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Bukidnon Tribe

DATU APOLONIO TIMBANGAN
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BAE GENELINDA SULADE
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Municipal Mayor
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Manager
Central Bukidnon Agro-Forest
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Municipal Mayor
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Municipal Mayor
Cabanlasan, Bukidnon

HON. MARIO T. OKINLAY
Municipal Mayor
Impasug-ong, Bukidnon

HON. NENITA M. SUYAO
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Municipal Mayor
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Libona, Bukidnon

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ABC President, Maramag, Bukidnon
ABC Federation President
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Board Member
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HON. VICTOR P. ALDEGUER
Board Member
2nd District
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Municipal Mayor
Maramag, Bukidnon

HON. MARIE ANN A. BAULA
Municipal Mayor
Sumilao, Bukidnon

HON. GREGORIO LL. GUE
Municipal Mayor
Quezon, Bukidnon

HON. FLORENCIO T. FLORES
City Mayor
Malaybalay City

HON. BEN P. PANCRUDO
Board Member
1st District, Bukidnon

HON. NICKARTER S. ONAHON
Board Member
1st District, Bukidnon

HON. GLENN P. PEDUCHE
Board Member
2nd District, Bukidnon

HON. CAMILO E. PEPITO
Board Member
2nd District, Bukidnon

CA justices . . .

From page A1

Besides, he said the P7.6 million spent for the purchase of four Ford Everests, two Isuzu Sportivos and two Toyota Innovas came from the sale of old court vehicles and was not taken from the CA's savings, the source of the grocery allowance.

"No savings was used to purchase the new cars," said Reyes, who before buying an Innova, had been using a 2001 Toyota Altis and a 1999 Toyota FX Revo, which he said were costly to maintain.

"I didn't even avail myself of the Toyota Camry that the CA could buy," said Reyes.

White paper

Reyes, 67, said he could not have dipped into the savings because the law was explicit that funds from the sale of government cars should be used for the purchase of new ones.

"It is legally not possible because under Sec. 12 of the General Appropriations Act, proceeds of sales from (old) motor vehicles (by government agencies) are automatically appropriated for the purchase of new cars," he said.

Reyes was reacting to a white paper in which some of the 1,500 court employees said they were looking forward to having the "loneliest Christmas ever in the history of this court."

Silent protest

They faulted Reyes for reducing the grocery bonus to P6,000 in order to "curry his own comfort at the expense of the needful employees."

On Monday, a handful of CA employees wore black armbands and refused to come to work in their uniforms.

However, Reyes assured that the P20,000 in grocery allowance will be given to each court employee in full early next year, when the appellate court gets its budget for the first quarter of 2007.

He explained that the grocery allowance fund of P30 million was taken from the CA's savings and was on top of the Christmas bonus, which was given to the employees in stages in June and November.

Contrary to the allegations against him, Reyes said he was giving the employees bigger benefits in terms of an advance Christmas bonus in November, a one-month economic assistance and a midyear bonus, among others.

Verbal exchange

Early this year, Reyes came into a verbal exchange with former Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban for saying that it was Panganiban who asked him to get a new car befitting someone in his position.

"It's not for you, but for the dignity of the office," Reyes recalled Panganiban as telling him.

Reyes said then he was considering buying a Toyota Camry worth P1.5 million and another van. He never did.

He said he gave up a P2.5-million budget for a luxury car or cars to afford CA employees "fringe benefits" of up to P10,000 each.

He said this explained why he was seen going around an ordinary van while his colleagues were seen being driven around in flashy cars.

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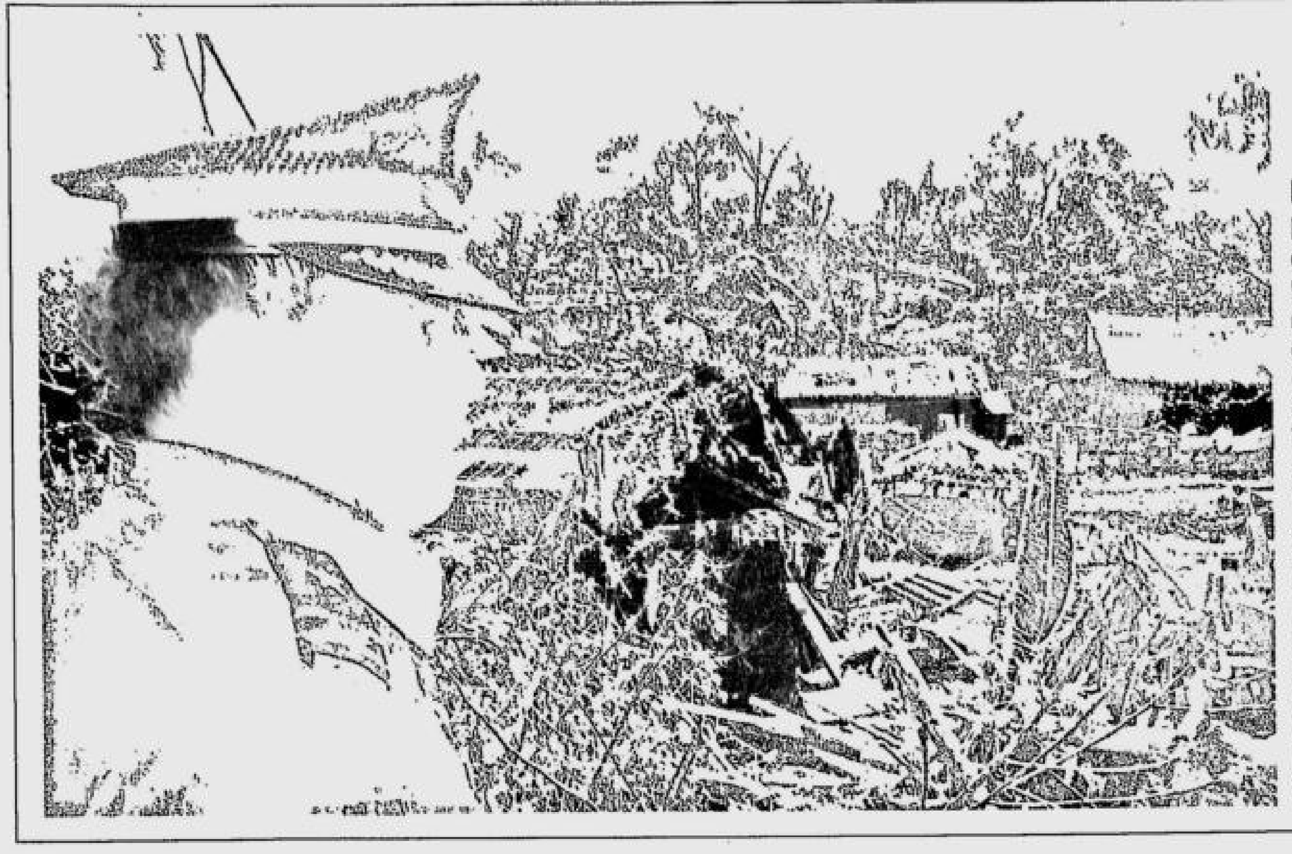

PARADISE LOST Chief Supt. Gerry Barias, chief of the regional disaster coordinating council (RDCC), surveys the damage caused by Typhoon "Seniang" on Boracay Island. The popular tourist spot took a direct hit from the typhoon on Sunday, destroying several houses and knocking down power supply to hotels and resorts.

ARNOLD ALMACEN / INQUIRER VISAYAS

Budget bicam breaks deadlock over P8.2B

DESPITE LOCKING HORNS ON Charter change, senators and congressmen yesterday set aside their differences and reached a major breakthrough on the first day of the bicameral conference committee on the P1.126 trillion proposed 2007 budget.

The Senate and House panels agreed to do away with the P8.2-billion excess funds that the lower chamber had inserted in the programmed funds of its version, eliminating a major flashpoint for disagreement.

The senators had earlier feared that the excess funds in the House programmed appropriations would cause a deadlock at the bicameral committee.

The breakthrough, which was unexpected since it came on the heels of verbal skirmishes between Senate and House leaders on Charter change, has raised optimism that Congress could approve the budget before it adjourns for the holiday season on Dec. 22.

"We are already discussing how we can agree on the various provisions of the budget. We are confident that with this authorization for the two chairs to sit down and thresh out differences, we should have a budget before the year is over," said Sen. Franklin Drilon, chair of the Senate panel, referring to his House counterpart, Albay Rep. Joey Salceda.

Shortly after convening the bicameral committee at the Philippine Coconut Authority in Quezon City, Salceda proposed that both chambers adopt the ceiling of the national expenditure program at P1.126 trillion.

Drilon agreed to this, but pointed out that the ceiling should be cut by P200 million, representing the priority development assistance fund (PDAF), or pork barrel, waived by opposition Sen. Panfilo Lacson.

Salceda concurred. He then said that the House panel agreed with the Senate version pegging the ceiling on the programmed appropriations at P573.912 billion, some P8.2 billion less than the programmed funds in the lower chamber's version.

"There's really few to disagree on," he later told the committee.

Drilon, Senate finance committee chair, was elated by the breakthrough on the first day of the bicameral committee.

"The major area of difference is the excess of P8.2 billion in the new programs in the budget. And that this has been threshed out. So we can now get down to the nitty-gritty of the budget, a line by line review. I am confident we would be able to come up with agreement," he said, after the bicameral conference committee.

Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya, Finance Secretary Margarito Teves and National Economic Development Authority Secretary Romulo Neri had viewed the House insertion of P8.2 billion in the programmed funds as "constitutionally infirm" and "fiscally unsound."

Toward the end, Lanao del Sur Rep. Benasing Macarambon moved that the chairmen be "empowered to shorten the proceedings," and update the members on any breakthrough.

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Coast Guard probes motorboat overloading

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE MOTOR BOAT FILLED WITH tourists that sank on its way to Batangas the other day could have been overloaded, the Philippine Coast Guard said.

The PCG, which is investigating the incident, will check on the condition of the vessel, MB Brian, as well as the weather and other factors that may have contributed to the sinking, according to the agency spokesperson, Lt. Commander Joseph Coyme.

He said the culpability of the PCG and maritime personnel who were supposed to enforce safety rules, like making sure the boat was not overloaded, would be considered as well.

The PCG had received information that the MB Brian's capacity was 88 passengers but was carrying 104 people when it sank.

"We will look into any lapse in the implementation of maritime safety rules, and the capacity and capability of the vessel. We will also check all the possible reasons that could have led to the incident," Coyme said.

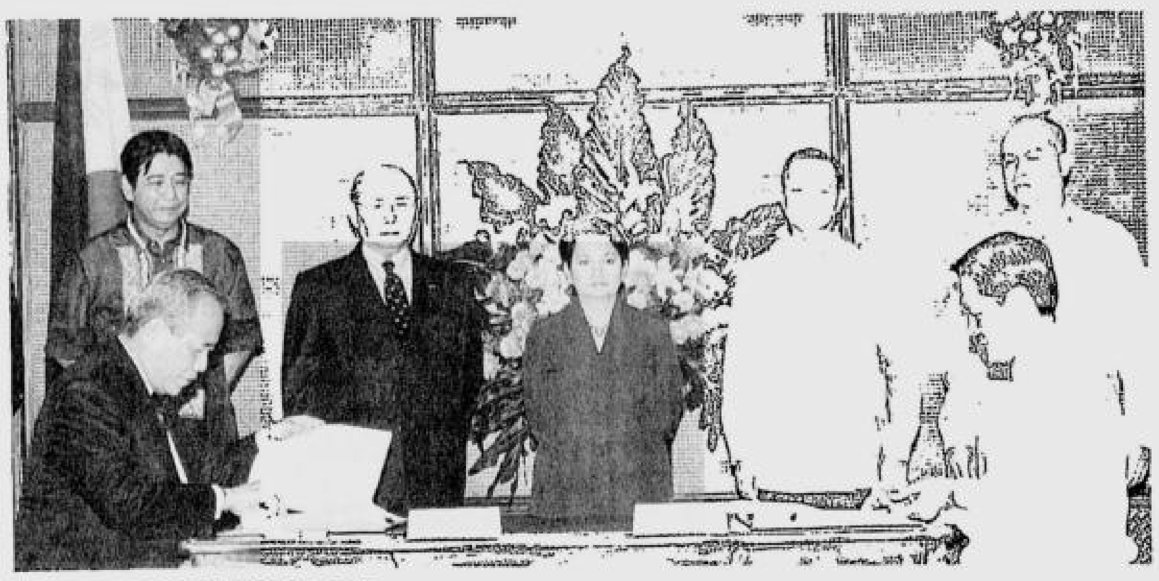
One passenger said he saw big big waves during the voyage, which could have ripped the back portion of the boat, causing water to rush in.

Coyme appealed to ferry operators and passengers to follow all maritime rules to prevent or minimize untoward incidents at sea.

Fortunately, all 104 passengers of MB Brian were rescued. The boat had come from the popular tourist destination Puerto Galera in Mindoro and was on its way to Batangas when it sank.

The PCG Batangas also identified four of the five rescued foreigners. They are American national Vicky Penwell, Danish nationals Claus Christine Son and Fatime Bin Romphane and Dutch national Wilhem Braumer.

The PCG was only able to get the names of 100 passengers because most of the people left the Port of Batangas immediately after being rescued.



GENERICS FOR THE POOR
President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo witnesses the signing between Philippine International Trading Corp. Chair Roberto Pagdanganan and Interphil President Frank Billano of an agreement fulfilling the request of the Philippine government for Interphil, the Zuellig Group's contract pharmaceutical manufacturing arm, to manufacture 20 off-patent generic drugs which will made available to the disadvantaged sector of society at prices at least 50 percent less than current prices for branded pharmaceuticals. Also witnessing the signing (left to right) Interphil COO Santiago Garcia, senior presidential advisor Roberto Romulo, Health Secretary Francisco Duque and Ted Rivera of PITC.

Lafayette says it's intact despite typhoon

LAFAYETTE MINING ANnounced yesterday its environment systems had withstood the three recent typhoons and that it remained in full compliance of the conditions of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources for the resumption of its operations.

In a press statement, Lafayette said all its environmental infrastructure had withstood the tests of three consecutive typhoons—"Milenyo," "Reming," and "Seniang."

"Our dams and ponds, the open pit, and other environmental infrastructure incurred zero damage despite strong winds and rains, with plenty to spare. The environment was fully protected as we had promised early this year that we would be the model of responsible mining here," said Carlos G. Dominguez, Lafayette Philippines chair and president.

Dominguez said damage was limited to buildings, electricals, conveyor belts, roads, and the wharf. He added: "Our environmental systems could not have been subjected to a worse test. And we passed with flying colors."

"That allowed us to shift our people and quickly mobilize to help in the rescue and recovery efforts as an aftermath of typhoon Reming," he said. Lafayette deployed an 80-man rescue team and served as coordinator in the DENR-led efforts in Albay, the worst-hit by Reming.

Dominguez said that before typhoon Milenyo, the water level at the company's environmental dams was 9.2 meters below the rim.

"That freeboard became 8.9 meters after Milenyo dumped 139 mm of rain; 7.33 meters after Reming, which dumped 448 mm; and 6.5 meters after 298 mm from Seniang," he said.

In October last year, when the company had two minor incidents, the rainfall measured only 126 mm, almost one-fourth that of Reming.

Dominguez took over the management of the company in January this year, promising full transparency and compliance with government conditions.

Forum tackles mining issues

THE THREAT TO ANCESTRAL DOMAIN posed by large-scale mining activities and the trampling of the rights of indigenous peoples (IPs) were the main issues discussed at a forum on Monday during the 2nd Asean Civil Society Conference (ACSC) held at the Montebello Hotel in Cebu City.

During the forum, Filipino IPs and their Indonesian IP guests led by Cion Alexander and Norman Jijuan of the Dayak tribe shared lessons and insights and called for increased awareness of and government action on the matter in their respective countries. A guest speaker, Dr. Quang Toan of Vietnam, spoke on the experiences of IPs in his country.

"Since the Asean Minerals Cooperation Action Plan was approved, we noticed an aggressive promotion of large-scale mining. This poses a threat to IPs not only in the Philippines but also in other Southeast Asian countries," said Jaybee Garganera, national coordinator of the Alyansa Tigil Mina (ATM).

For inquiries, call the ATM Secretariat (59 C. Salvador St., Loyola Heights, Quezon City) at 426-6740, e-mail to nc@phildhrra.org or visit www.phildhrra.org.

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Only RP-based agencies can recruit Pinoys for Spain

ONLY PHILIPPINE-BASED PLACEment agencies may recruit Filipino workers to Spain, according to the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration.

POEA Administrator Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz said her office has received reports that some manpower agents were recruiting Filipino caregivers in Israel and other countries to work in Spain.

She also warned of job placement web sites that lure Filipinos already working abroad into working in Spain.

Baldoz said that under Spanish laws, the recruitment fee for the placement agency was limited to the equivalent of a month's salary and can only be collected after the Spanish Embassy in Manila issues the entry visa and work permit.

The POEA chief said it was illegal to enter Spain with a tourist visa if the intention is to seek employment and that such visas cannot be converted to work permits.

Under the "Proyekto Piloto" (pilot project) agreed on by the Philippine and Spanish governments last year, Filipino healthcare professionals and skilled workers are now being recruited to work in Spain on an experimental basis.

The qualification requirements are: academic degrees in medicine, nursing, physical therapy and related fields; adequate work experience in a hospital or healthcare institution; and proficiency in the Spanish language.

Jerome Aning

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Wednesday, December 13, 2006
2nd Week of Advent
1st Reading: Is 40:25-31
Gospel: Matthew 11:28-30

Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who work hard and who carry heavy burdens and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and humble of heart; and you will find rest. For my yoke is good and my burden is light."

Commentary

Our God is strength, might, creating and sustaining. And God shares his strength with those who need it, an unending source of hope and power. If we rely on the Lord and put our trust in him we will run and not grow weary and even soar with eagles' wings in our lives. Yahweh graces Jesus with this strength, and he invites us to come to him when we are weary and find life hard because we have been working for God's justice, the poor and peace. We will be yoked with Jesus' cross and glory, and our lives will be light. Together we will all dance. God's dreams are reality in Jesus and he wants to continue making them come true in us.

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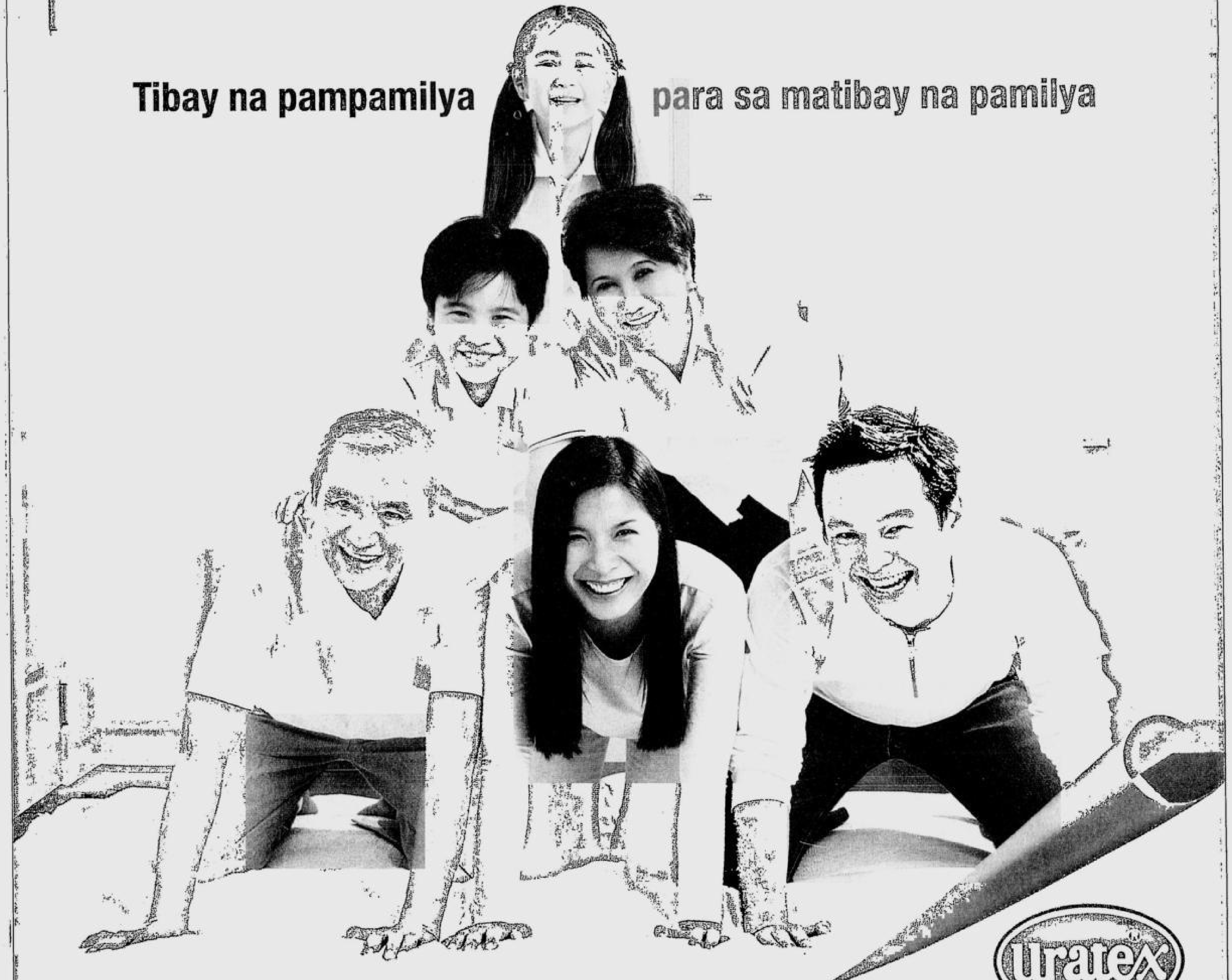
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Sex-abused child now rights . . .

From page A1

mind, shuttling as she was between finishing a two-year practical nursing course and working as a facilitator at the Preda (People's Recovery, Empowerment and Development Assistance) Foundation, the group that had plucked her from the streets.

The Woman's Opportunity Award is given to "young women who have the potential to lead and make a valuable contribution to society," according to Soroptimist International.

Corvera was honored for her efforts to rebuild her life while helping others start anew and constantly asking local and international groups to protect children.

Sanae Nakajima

The award was given after Corvera completed a series of speeches in Japan on the sponsorship of the Sanae Nakajima (Free the Children), which seeks a stop to child labor.

According to Corvera, the latest trip to Japan—her third—enabled her to interact with parents, community councils and civic organizations and discuss the need to band together to protect children from various forms of exploitation.

On Nov. 23, Soroptimist International's Nozomi Hirayama, representing its president Hiroko Kittaka, traveled to Preda headquarters in Olongapo to hand the award to Corvera.

With it came 100,000 yen (about P50,000), which Corvera has put in a bank for use in her hospital training next year.

Corvera said she had lost track of the number of times she spoke at local and international conferences.

But her message remains the same: "I always tell [my audience] to protect the children, to ensure a safe society for them, and to provide them a good future."

Celebrated trial

Corvera is an authentic face and a strong voice representing street children who become sex workers as a result of desperation, deceit or greed.

Her own case involved a difficult court trial where she stood up to her abusers and ensured that Thomas Breuer and Lennart Van Empel of Germany and the Netherlands, respectively, were convicted of child sexual abuse.

On Dec. 18, 1996, Breuer was sentenced to three-and-a-half years in prison, and Van Empel, one year.

Corvera consented to reveal her identity in 1997.

The celebrated trial drew world attention to a problem often dismissed as just one of life's realities.

The five-page chronology of Corvera's case is an example of how some policemen, National Bureau of Investigation agents and lawyers can plant land mines on the long road to justice.

But it also shows how priests, including Preda founder Fr. Shay Cullen, nuns, social workers and justice and immigration officials can move as one to see the case through.

They took off from the efforts of the wife of an official in the world-famous resort of Boracay, where Corvera and her friend, identified only as MC, were taken by their abusers.

Cullen, an Irishman of the Columban order, did not give up on the two girls, and took the case directly to German authorities.

Within nine days, Breuer and Van Empel were behind bars, and the 12-year-old Corvera was released from doubt and self-hate.

"Pia is an amazing young woman," said Cullen.

Courage

In 2003, Missio, the German Catholic bishops' agency for international mission work, honored Corvera for her courage in pursuing justice against her and her friend's abusers.

Missio said her case had inspired the agency to campaign against sex tourism and child abuse.

In receiving the honor, Corvera called on President Macapagal-Arroyo to put, an end to the growing industry of prostitution in the country and to save children from various forms of abuse.

Judge needs more time for custody ruling

By Tarra V. Quismundo

THE FILIPINO JUDGE TASKED TO RESOLVE the dispute over the custody of convicted rapist Daniel Smith yet again deferred his ruling yesterday despite the Philippine government's position that the American Marine should be returned to US custody in line with provisions of the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA).

EDWIN BACASMAS

POZON: Still pondering Smith's fate.

Judge Benjamin Pozon did not show up in his chambers the whole day yesterday as Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith's lawyers, opposing private prosecutors and members of the media awaited his resolution on the soldier's appeal to be transferred from the Makati City Jail to the US Embassy.

His staff said the judge decided to work out of the office to ponder on Smith's plea which involves debated provisions of the VFA. There was no word on when the judge would issue his ruling.

Smith, who was sentenced by Judge Pozon to life imprisonment on Dec. 4 after he was found guilty of raping a Filipino woman inside the Subic Bay Freeport in 2005, was returned to his temporary detention quarters at the records section of the Makati City Jail.

Pozon had also deferred making a ruling last Friday and set a hearing on Monday to listen to the arguments addressing pertinent VFA provisions on the criminal jurisdiction of US soldiers facing cases in the Philippines.

An hour apart, private prosecutors and Smith's lawyers filed their pleadings in court yesterday morning reiterating their stand on the matter.

Smith's lawyers, representatives of the Department of Justice and the Department of Foreign Affairs, all concurred with the American position that Smith should be returned to the US Embassy.

An agreement, signed by US Ambassador Kristie Kenney and Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, was submitted to court on Friday informing Pozon that the US and the Philippines have already agreed that Smith should be detained at the US Embassy until final judgment, or when the appeals process has ended.

In a manifestation filed yesterday, Smith's lawyer, Jose Justiniano, told Pozon that the VFA "is clear and unequivocal, and leaves no room for judicial interpretation," particularly on the custody issue.

"Judicial proceedings ... encompass all proceedings conducted in Philippine courts of justice, including the appeals process, up to their final termination." He said the United States is nonetheless obligated to make the accused available for further proceedings on appeal.

On the other hand, it was the position of private prosecutor Evalyn Ursua that judicial proceedings in the context of the VFA only pertains to the trial, and that the convicted US Marine should then serve his sentence in a Philippine facility.

Ursua and other lawyers on the side of complainant "Nicole" oppose the move to transfer Smith back to US custody, saying it would be "the same as granting Smith liberty."

Another private prosecutor, Rene Saguisag, pounced on the government's submission to the United States in the custody issue. In his own memorandum, Saguisag said: "Our officials should not be falling all over themselves just to please the Great White Father and should appreciate the restraint of the Honorable Presiding Judge given the complexity of the situation."

Judge Pozon had aired the following concerns about the VFA:

What does the "one-year period of obligation" mean under Paragraph 6? The provision states that judicial proceedings, except the time for appeal, shall be completed within a year or else the United States "shall be relieved of any obligation" to produce the accused soldier in court. But since trial was indeed completed before Dec. 27, a year since judicial proceedings began, does the US obligation to bring the accused to court apply to his intended appeal?

Does Paragraph 10 mean an American serviceman, upon final conviction, shall serve his sentence in the Philippines in a facility agreed on by the United States and the Philippines? Was this the intention of the line "confinement or detention by Philippine authorities of US personnel?"

How far does the convicted serviceman's "right to visits and material assistance" extend, as stipulated in Paragraph 10?

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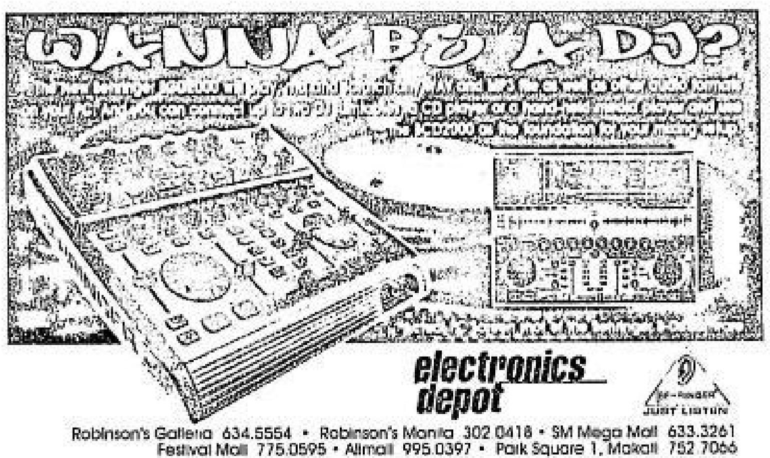

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Next heavy rains could flood Albay

LEGAZPI CITY—NEXT TIME THERE'S heavy rainfall in Albay, villages could be submerged in flood waters, according to a public works official here.

Several dams and dikes around Mayon Volcano were destroyed by lahar caused by super typhoon "Reming." Without these structures, floodwaters could create pathways to just about anywhere, said Orlando Roces, regional director of the Department of Public Works and Highways-Bicol.

Some of the dams and dikes were destroyed by gullies and river channels located near the volcano's slopes. The bodies of water overflowed because they could no longer accommodate the 466-millimeter rainfall brought by Reming.

Damage to infrastructure in the Bicol region already reached P1.2 billion, Roces said, adding that it could take years to rebuild everything, depending on available funds.

He said the rehabilitation of flood control facilities would begin with a thorough study on how to effectively redirect flooding to Albay Gulf.

"The course of the water has changed because of the lahar. We will have to wait for the results of the study now being conducted by the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs), which will serve as our guide. Then we will conduct our own two-week study," Roces said.

An eight-man team of engineers and geologists sent by the Japanese government is now in Albay assessing the damage to flood control facilities and will also give recommendations.

The priority of the DPWH in Bicol was to clear the roads, Roces said, adding that this would be soon completed. A major bridge in Ligao City and five minor bridges were also badly in need of repair.

Roces said he had conferred with top officials of DPWH in Manila and they pledged to send an initial P58 million to Bicol. *Ephraim Aguilar, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

Entire families going abroad to find work

NOT JUST ONE OR TWO FAMILY MEMBERS, but entire families are going abroad to find work, reported officials of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration.

Speaking in a conference on migration, Vivian Tornea, OWWA planning and program development director, said whole-family migration is being made easier by another developing trend: e-recruitment.

Tornea said advances in technology brought about by e-recruitment of workers have already bypassed the regular deployment system set up by the government.

There is a growing number of Filipinos who are able to join other overseas family members through the direct searching and matching capabilities of internet recruiters, it was noted during the conference hosted by the Labor Department's Institute for Labor Studies. *Jerome Aning*

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Japanese minister bashes RP, says summit is a

Postponement due to terror, says Cambodia PM

HUN SEN

PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA—THE threat of a terrorist attack was one reason for the postponement of two high-profile Asian summits due to take place in Cebu City, this week, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen said Tuesday.

There had been considerable speculation—but no official confirmation—that fear of terrorism was one of the reasons for postponing the Dec. 11-13 annual summit of leaders of the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations and their meetings with the leaders of China, Japan and South Korea.

Last Friday, the Philippine government abruptly postponed the meetings, blaming Typhoon Utor (local name: 'Seniang'), which was bearing down on the country near the venue of the summits in Cebu province.

But several reports in the media that cited unnamed Asian officials said the postponement might have been prompted by warnings from several foreign embassies in the Philippines that a terror attack was possible.

Hun Sen, in a speech given in the countryside, noted that he would have been in the Philippines on Tuesday had the meetings there not been postponed.

"But in the Philippines, there was a typhoon on one hand and threat of attack on the other," he said in a speech in Svay Rieng province, about 110 kilometers (68 miles) southeast of the capital Phnom Penh.

"The terrorists threatened to launch an attack" in the Philippines, Hun Sen added without elaborating. His speech was broadcast on the national radio.

In separate advisories last Wednesday, the United States, Britain and Australia warned terrorists might be plotting attacks in the central Philippines, the site of the meetings.

Philippine security officials said they had not discovered any specific terror threats against the summit, but could not discount them.

Asean is made up of Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Philippine officials have said the meetings may resume on Jan. 11-13. *AP*

TOKYO—JAPAN'S ECONOMY MINISTER said Tuesday that the Philippines lost credibility by postponing twin Asian summits this week and doubted Manila's stated reason of an impending typhoon.

Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Akira Amari also said he believed the summits were effectively cancelled as the rescheduled January dates would not suit all the leaders.

The abrupt postponement of the Asean and East Asia summits "surely lowered the credibility of the Philippine government," Amari wrote on his blog.

"Officials concerned actually see the summits as de facto called off, considering the tight schedules of national leaders in the next six months," Amari said, in unusually blunt remarks about a friendly nation.

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last-minute decision Friday to ne the two summits on the resort f Cebu, citing an approaching ty-

announcement came amid f a terrorist attack as Britain, ia; the United States and oth- ons had warned against travel).

sidering the size of the ty- and that it passed by Sunday g, the reason for the duling was difficult to under- Amari wrote.

ilippine) media have reported l reason might have been the gs of a high possibility of ter- ttacks, released not only by but also the United States im- ely before the events," he

extremely dangerous in security for leaders from 16 nations to at a hotel on Cebu, which is packed with tourists."

He contrasted the Philippines to communist Vietnam, which was host to the 21-nation Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit last month.

"The difference between the Philippines and Vietnam, which banned the entry of people not related to the APEC forum, was as clear as daylight," he said.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe went ahead with a shortened visit to the Philippines and held talks in Manila with Arroyo.

Reports have said Abe is unlikely to attend the postponed summits due to plans to visit Europe and parliamentary commitments.

Japanese foreign ministry officials refused to confirm the reports, saying the Philippine government was arranging the postponed events. *AFP*

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OPINION

While we slept

EDITORIAL

HAD THE NATION NOT NOTICED WHAT THE House of Representatives had set upon to do, we would have wakened up to discover not an emerging but a full-blown constitutional crisis, as the House would have unilaterally proposed amendments to the constitution and instructed the Commission on Elections to call for a plebiscite. The process of proposing plebiscite questions would have been challenged in the courts, to be sure. But in one fell swoop it would have forced the Supreme Court to intervene or risk being overtaken by events.

And for what? Several simple proposals that horrified the public: lengthen the three-year term to a five-year term; abolish the term limits, thus making for longer terms with fewer elections required; postpone the May 2007 elections to November 2007, with the inherent possibility that a new National Assembly could then further postpone the elections: Rep. Luis Villafuerte went on record that they (members of the majority coalition) might as well postpone the elections to 2010. And eliminate the national vote by immediately instituting a parliamentary government.

The pell-mell rush to amend the House's own rules—rules that had endured not only with every Congress, from the 8th to the 13th, but also hark back to a century of legislative tradition dating back to the Philippine Assembly of 1907—was due to plain and simple selfishness. A kind of selfishness that has been an enduring hallmark of the House.

In 1940, after three years of public debate, the then-unicameral National Assembly agreed to propose some constitutional amendments, but the primary amendment in its mind was to raise its own salaries. Fierce public opposition forced them to withdraw the proposal and focus on the truly significant ones: to drop the six-year presidential term in favor of a four-year term with one reelection; to restore the Senate; and to establish a Commission on Elections.

The question, of course, is why an extremely powerful National Assembly went along with a president's desire to drop the unicameral government and restore a bicameral legislature, a shift that was approved in plebiscite in 1941. It was more than about the incumbent's desire to prolong his stay in office. As then Speaker Jose Yulo put it in what has become a maxim—"Six years is too long for a bad president and four years is too short for a good one"—justifying the adoption of the two four-year terms for presidents.

Both Manuel Quezon and Ferdinand Marcos were equally ambitious presidents. Both fostered their own ambitions, but they used their powers for totally divergent goals.

The tubercular Quezon knew he would die, and tried to moderate a lifetime of ambition with belated glimmerings of statesmanship. He found an assembly of mediocrities to be not conducive to building up qualified successors. Who would—could—succeed him and Osmeña, both senior citizens at the time, to the presidency of the Republic? Thus the desire to reestablish a Senate to both build up, and train, future presidents who would have a platform for showing they could tackle national, not just parochial, concerns.

In contrast, Marcos said it of himself, "I do not intend to die," and never, ever, did he show an interest in building up future leaders capable of succeeding to the office he clung on to with every means at his disposal. His creation was a unicameral assembly, the Batasang Pambansa, which was neither dynamic nor credible and, by its nature, incapable of fostering leaders to replace him.

But both presidents have been reproached by history for throwing their office fully behind constitutional changes that benefited themselves.

All politicians have mixed motivations, but there are motivations in which the maximum self-interest are evident. This is what has happened in recent days. Maximum ambition and maximum opportunism provoked the public into a fury that has forced the House to retreat but not quite a retreat yet. As Rep. Prospero Nograles proposed Monday night, the House has decided to postpone, not cancel, its constituent assembly plan. Those who run away live to fight another day. But the House's fight is far from over.

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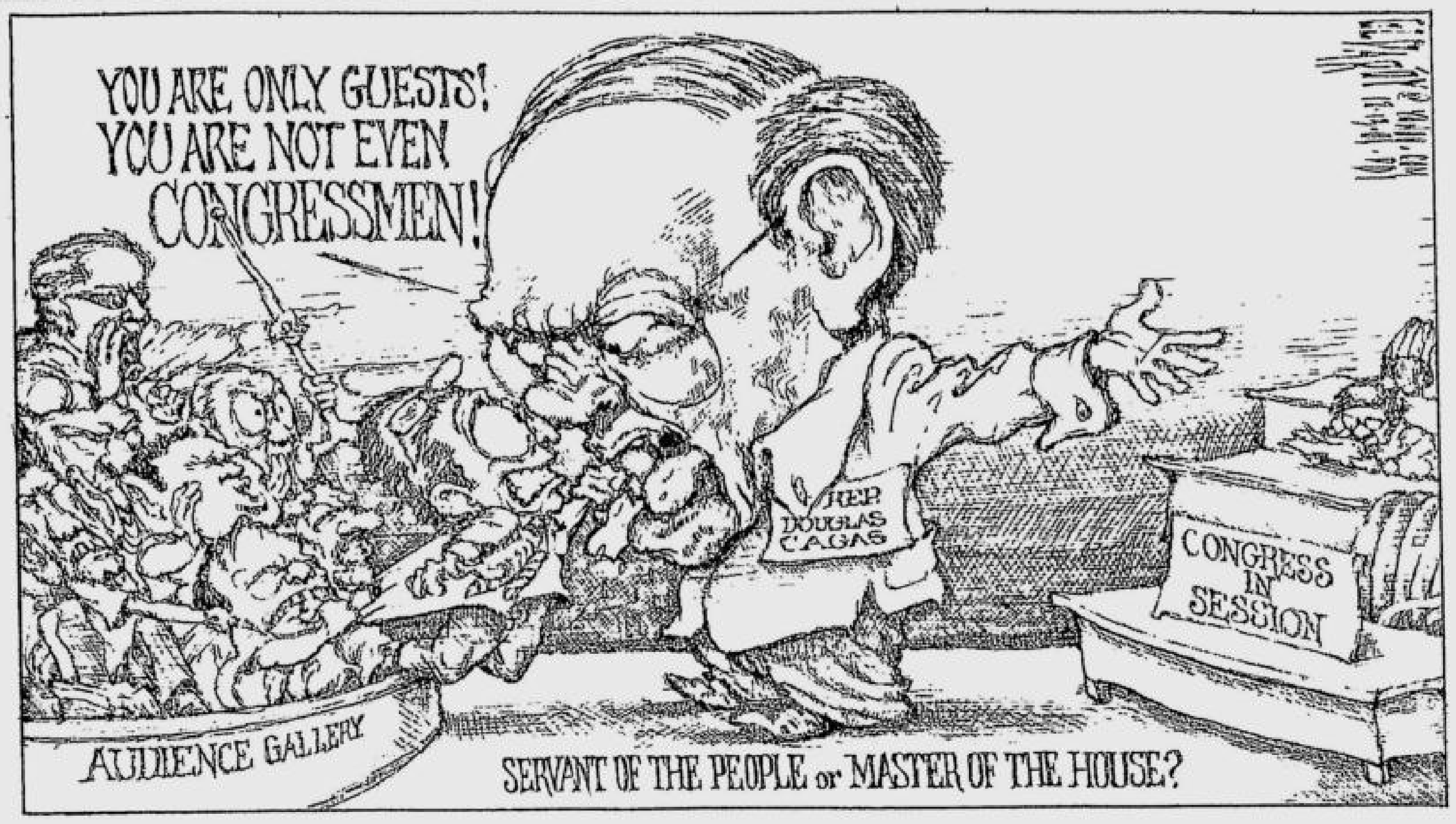

SERVANT OF THE PEOPLE or MASTER OF THE HOUSE?

Give it up, Joe

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

CON-ASS IS DEAD! LONG LIVE THE PEOPLE!

Speaker Jose de Venecia and his fellow con-asses in the House of Representatives are still hoping to revive it, but it is already in rigor mortis. In fact, it is already rotting. It stinks to the high heavens. JDV should drop his obsession with Charter change at this time. He should be patient and wait for another time. He should let the passions cool down and let ambition and selfishness die down. The atmosphere is too hot to write a new Constitution in the sober, mature and responsible manner required in crafting a fundamental law. Like a fruit on a tree, he should give it time to mature and ripen, so that when he picks it, it will be very sweet.

We already have had so many constitutions. We keep changing them, believing that we can solve our problems by having a new constitution. But the problems only grow every time we change Charters. Because while the form of government and rules change, the people who run the government remain the same. The problem is not in the constitution but in the people who implement it.

And we have the bad luck of having the most rapacious and morally bankrupt politicians in the world to implement it. In fact, even if we rewrite our Constitution now, if it is to be done by the same group of politicians, we will end up with an even worse Charter. It would be like jumping from the frying pan into the fire. The draft of the proposed Charter already shows that.

The motive behind the Cha-cha is also quite obvious. It is for the present group of politicians to perpetuate themselves in office. Elections will be postponed, terms will be extended, the term limits will be removed, the ban on political family dynasties will be lifted, salaries and allowances will be increased, etc. It will throw back the Philippines to the Middle Ages with fiefdoms of political families controlling the nation.

Worse, it will deprive the people of the right to choose their chief executive. The entrenched politicians will pick the prime minister from among themselves, as well as the members of the Cabinet and even the members of the Supreme Court. The people will be left with paying the bills but they themselves cannot choose the persons who will spend their money.

Elections are sacred to the Filipinos. It is the only time that the common people feel they have a hand in running the government. That is why an election day is like another Christmas in the Philippines.

No wonder the people are rising in outrage and indignation at the audacity of the House of Representatives to illegally convene a constituent assembly, without the Senate's participation, to write the new Charter. The planned protest rallies on Dec. 17 promise to be the biggest yet during the entire two terms of the hated Macapagal-Arroyo presidency, despite the fact that the administration has already beaten a hasty retreat. Had the con-asses insisted, the rallies could have turned into another massive people power growing bigger and bigger every day, until it swept the con-asses and their sponsor GMA out of power.

Give up the Con-ass, Joe. The thing is too big for you. Leave your fate to history. Let it remember you kindly.

Even a constitutional convention is out of the question at this time. It would cost a hefty P10 billion, according to Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya Jr. And both he and Finance Secretary Margarito Teves said we don't have the money for it, and neither can we raise it from new sources. First of all, relief for victims of the last two typhoons also require that much money: P10 billion. And we are scraping the bottom of the treasury for that. We cannot afford to squander another P10 billion (those are billions, not millions of pesos) on a silly misadventure just to fulfill the ambition of one man or save the skin of one woman. Are we going to deny our people what they need, deny our workers what they deserve to satisfy the cravings of politicians?

I say we can still make do with our present Constitution. At least it was written by men and women with no ulterior motives. It has already served us well for many years. We elected several presidents with it. It can stand a few more years of use.

I say we can wait until after 2010 before tinkering with it. By then, many of the present politicians may be dead or retired, and we would have fresh blood to rewrite it.

Or we can amend it piecemeal, one at a time, like they still do in the United States. That would be the most economical—minor amendments can be submitted for ratification to the people at the same time as the regular elections. Little extra expense may be needed for that. And each amendment can be discussed thoroughly with the people. If it works with mighty America, it should also work for us.

Of course you can't revise the Charter for a shift to a parliamentary system. But that is the least of our problem. The form of government is not that important. The most important are the people who run it. Presidential and parliamentary systems both have their advantages and disadvantages. Either way, if you have the same rotten officials, you have the same rotten government.

The economic provisions that they claim are hindering our economic progress can be changed through mere amendments or legislations.

But, of course, the real purpose of JDV's Cha-cha is to effect a shift to a parliamentary system. The other proposed amendments are only for camouflage. That is why JDV is so obsessed with Cha-cha. It is his pass to be chief executive, a dream that is slipping from his fingers.

Let it go, Joe.

Anywhere will do

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

I DON'T KNOW IF IT'S COMPLETELY BY coincidence that Pagcor has rented the Quirino grandstand on the very day that the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines was to lead its flock there for a prayer rally, which was this Friday. But my first reaction to that was: no matter. So what if they got Rizal Park? All they'll succeed in doing is add another insult to Rizal, the one person Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in particular likes to invoke—after God—to justify clinging to power. It should help to remind us what she did to him four years ago on his death anniversary.

Rizal in any case, like God, has been known to express himself through the people, and send retribution to tyrants through them. *Vox populi, vox Dei; vox populi, vox Josei*. The voice of the people is the voice of God, the voice of the people is the voice of Rizal. Certainly, neither God nor Rizal has been known to speak through Pagcor or GMA or Joe de Venecia. Whose voice passes through them, well, feel free to speculate on the source.

That was before the CBCP decided to postpone its prayer rally to Sunday to still get the Luneta. Well, I am glad at least that CBCP head Archbishop Angel Lagdameo will push through with it notwithstanding GMA's order for Joe de V to drop Con-ass. We have every reason to distrust these people. "We cannot let our guard down, we cannot trust them," Msgr. Meliton Oso, executive director of Jaro Archdiocese social action center, expressly said. I'd have thought though that Friday would have been the better day, even for prayer. I can only hope the faithful would prove true to their faith this Sunday and stay away from the malls and the cockpits to show their solidarity with their shepherd.

Frankly, I don't know that the Edsa Shrine wouldn't have been a better venue. It has a more storied past, one at least that the current generation still remembers. I did think initially that Pagcor did the bishops an unwitting favor by driving them away from the Luneta straight into the arms of Edsa. Plaza Miranda and the Mendiola Bridge would also have been good venues, but much of their symbolic value would probably have been lost on today's generation. Which I deeply rue: Plaza Miranda no longer stokes fires of pride or sends shivers of awe, but it used to be the very embodiment of freedom in this country. As every public figure said then, a law was not a law until it could be defended at Plaza Miranda. A point Joe de V and his minions badly need learning.

But the Edsa Shrine seemed much the better choice because, like I said, it holds tremendous symbolic value for the present generation. Who knows? Maybe a richly ironic value as well—the site that spawned the current tyranny being potentially the same site that could end it. Or spark the beginning of its end. I don't know that the CBCP or any other group would have needed a permit to gather there. Why would they? Joe de V and company themselves did not ask for a permit from the Constitution, or the source of the Constitution, the one thing that animates it—the **people**—to perform sodomy upon *Inang Bayan*. How else call Con-ass but that? At the very most, it's time we showed that we do not exist at their sufferance, they exist at ours. It's time we stopped suffering from them. It's time we stopped suffering them.

The statement by Kawal and likeminded groups that they would be there to protect the marchers from harm comes as no small reassurance.

But no matter, too: The place is not deathly important, the purpose is. I can only hope that the people who will go to the prayer rally this Sunday will go there to pray in the truest sense of the word. Which is to beg God not to do what one ought to do himself, but to beg God to give one the courage to do what one ought to do. In any case, God has been known to help only those who help themselves. Indeed, I can only hope that the people who go there to pray—which will most certainly include me—will go past praying Cha-cha to hell but give hell to the evil that makes abuses like the Cha-cha possible.

I said it yesterday: I can't understand why we should content ourselves with being at the receiving end of every iniquity or abuse this government, in whole or in part, foists upon us. The last time we congregated at Edsa, we ousted a government that had merely ceased to earn our trust. The current one hasn't just betrayed our trust, it never had it to begin with.

I don't know why De Venecia et al. should be free to make demands upon us when we should be the ones making demands upon them. At the very least, I don't know why we shouldn't demand that the May elections be turned from a senatorial to a presidential one. We already have a Constitution, we still do not have a president. The Constitution is genuine, the president is fake. Change the president, not the Constitution.

Turning next year's elections into snap presidential elections, not quite incidentally, is the only thing that will guarantee those elections will be clean. Which is the next problem we will be having after we thwart De Venecia from taking Malacañang by the rear—talk of Con-ass! GMA's example of imposing her will on this country by force has already been followed by De Venecia and company. What's to prevent the administration candidates from following her example about stealing the vote? You do not punish crime, crime will flourish. You do not punish crime, crime will be emulated.

The place doesn't really matter, the purpose does. If I recall my catechism right, Jesus Christ once told his apostles: "Whenever two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them."

The Fellow Downstairs didn't exactly say the same thing. But look at the *tongressmen* and their allies in the Palace, and see if he might not as well have said so.

Esther

COMMENTARY

Denis Murphy

ESTHER IS A YOUNG GIRL OF 10 WHO WORKS on the new Smokey Mountain, which is only a few hundred meters from the old Smokey Mountain. She wears black rubber boots, several sizes too large for her; perhaps she shares them with her mother who also scavenges. The boots are so big on Esther, she'd leap right out of them if she had to run. There's no running or any type of play on the garbage heap, however.

Esther doesn't go to school because there are four younger brothers and sisters to worry about. The father walked out on them one day. She can count though. My companion asked her to count the coins in his hand. She gave a quick look and told him "eight pesos." Eight pesos it was.

"How much do you earn in a day?" I asked.

"Sometimes ten pesos, sometimes fifty."

The new dump near Pier 18 of the North Harbor has an area of about 10 hectares, all of it veiled in the dark smoke that rises from the garbage. Only the huge steam shovels atop each garbage pile stand out above the smoke. They wait like prehistoric animals to defend their dens. The smell of garbage comes and goes with the wind.

It is late afternoon and few trucks unload the city's refuse, so Esther has time to talk to us. Her hair is matted with bits of straw and dirt. It is warm to the touch after absorbing the sun's heat all day. Her skin is still fresh. In a few years, it will be roughened like an old cardboard. She looks at us with large sad eyes.

We see hundreds of people working half heartedly on all sides. They turn over old piles that others have already searched. They just want to keep busy it seems: maybe sitting down and doing nothing attract flies or grim thoughts about their lives all of which they wish to avoid.

The dump is illegal. Open dumps are illegal everywhere, according to Republic Act 9003, also known as The Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000, especially in a crowded city and near enough to Manila Bay to pollute all of it and kill off the local fishing industry.

Close to 1,000 families live around the dump in what may well be the dirtiest, most rundown conditions in all of Metro Manila. They are not allowed legal water or light because the National Housing Authority that owns the land doesn't want to encourage them to stay there. A question arises: since people have a human right to adequate, clean water and light, can the government stop the delivery of these services into the area just because they intend the site for other purposes? Are there limits to the rights of ownership?

The Jesuit martyr Fr. Rutilio Grande of El Salvador gave a homily during a Mass in the village of Apopa in 1977: "The Lord God gave us … a material world for all, then, without borders … 'I'll buy half of El Salvador. Look at all my money. That'll give me the right to it.' … No! That's denying God! There is no 'right' against the masses of the people!"

Less than a month later, Grande was gunned down by a government-sponsored death squad. In response, Archbishop Oscar Romero took the extraordinary measure of declaring that only one Mass, the funeral Mass, would be celebrated in the Archdiocese that Sunday.

UN-Habitat, in a concept paper titled "Global Campaign for Secure Tenure," had this to say about the conflict between human rights and property rights: "In examining these challenging problems (property rights vs. human rights) the Global Campaign for Secure Tenure will need to be vigorous in asserting the absolute primacy of human rights."

The people will stay around the new Smokey Mountain legally or illegally, as long as the dump exists, since it provides a means of livelihood that, for many scavengers, is the only work they know. Esther's family lives in the new tenements erected beside the old Smokey Mountain, indicating that her father and mother were scavengers before her. Scavenging is a way of life for many. They follow the garbage. Esther's children will most likely also scavenge one day.

There are technical recycling solutions that have been discussed by city planners for years. Hopefully some day they will be implemented. There are human solutions also. In Argentina, in one similar dump, a group of Christians—including a religious sister living with the poor people in the area—share their problems and help them form a cooperative that bypasses layers of middle men and sells in bulk to the final users of their bottles, metal, plastic, wiring, etc.

While we wait for investment capital and dedicated activists, can we at least make sure the poor people have light, water, a place to clean up after their work, a day care center for the children, and some assurance from government they will not be evicted while the dump is there? A written order to this effect signed by President Macapagal-Arroyo would be the best Christmas present the people can have this year. Maybe, the president can also for the Feast of the Three Kings give the people of the dump her own version of gold, frankincense and myrrh—namely, water, light and a day care center.

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Shameful and treasonous

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

A REGULAR OBSERVER OF THE JUDICIAL PROceedings on the Subic rape case (who shall remain anonymous) has described the "boxing match" as "boiling down to the well-organized, systematic, sure-footed American government versus the ambivalent, wimpy, apologetic, disoriented Philippine government."

Unfair? I think she was even being polite! The actuations of the representatives of the executive—particularly the Department of Justice and the Department of Foreign Affairs—have been shameful and treasonous. They have not only failed to uphold Philippine sovereignty, they surrendered it even before the first salvos from the other side were launched.

I mean, the Makati courtroom of Judge Benjamin Pozon was just emptying when DFA's Zosimo Paredes, standing with the defense panel (why?), expressed support for a defense counsel's interpretation of the VFA provision on the custody of US military personnel in conflict with Philippine law. At the very least, he could have said that the provision was still subject to interpretation and hold out for a negotiation. This was, after all, what Judge Pozon implied when he remanded Smith to the Makati City Jail pending a decision by both the US and Philippine governments on where Smith was to be confined.

But sure enough, after the US Embassy issued a note verbale demanding custody of Smith, DOJ officials, represented by chief prosecutor Jovencito Zuno, stumbled all over themselves in their rush to co-sign an opinion supporting the American position. Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez even took Judge Pozon to task for setting the opinion aside and holding hearings on the issue. He accused the judge of "grandstanding" and seeking to extend his proverbial 15 minutes of fame. Well, given his penchant for making improper and unwelcome comments, can't we say the same about the (in)justice secretary?

* * *

AS I write this, Judge Pozon is set to render his decision today on the issue of Smith's custody. But even if Pozon would do the right thing and declare that the Philippines should retain custody of the convicted Marine, the behavior of our government, especially the abject refusal of its officials to stand up to American pressure, has already brought shame to our country.

Why can't we even put up a show of independence from America? It may be futile to argue with the world's only superpower, and the US Embassy's threat to review security arrangements if its interpretation is not upheld may have serious implications on domestic and foreign security. But couldn't we at least try to defend our interests?

People present at the custody hearing have remarked on how pathetic the "Philippine side," or rather, the side of Nicole, looked inside the courtroom. Private prosecutor Evalyn Ursua was there all by her lonesome arguing for Philippine custody, with only lawyer Rene Saguisag coming in later to argue the case. In contrast, there were about a dozen lawyers from top-notch local firms to argue the US side.

And while Nicole could count on only a single row of supporters, the rest of the courtroom was filled by defense lawyers, their staff, and representatives of the DFA and DOJ, there to argue for the American interpretation of the VFA provision. Where does this place the prosecutors who belong to the DOJ? Aren't they supposed to be fighting on the side of Nicole? And wouldn't keeping Smith in Philippine custody be genuinely serving the ends of justice?

Remember that when the US deports Filipinos from the United States on whatever charges, they step off the plane in handcuffs, their feet shackled. They would have spent some time in a detention facility, and unilaterally penalized—by deportation. I have yet to see Smith in handcuffs, and he has been languishing, not behind bars, but in a records room. The biggest punishment he has been subjected to so far is being made to sleep on monobloc chairs. Is he a convicted rapist or not?

* * *

SOMETHING US Ambassador Kristie Kenney stated in her remarks after a call on Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto Romulo grates on the ear and on one's sensibilities.

"Lance Corporal Smith is a not a private citizen—he is a member of the US military," Ambassador Kenney said. "He was here on a military mission …"

Precisely. When he was drinking and dirty dancing in an Olongapo club and then carrying off Nicole on his back, Smith was also a member of the US military, a representative of his government and country. As such, he was, or should have been, held to a higher standard of behavior. Despite the efforts of his lawyers and supporters to portray his behavior as "normal," the court clearly found his rape of Nicole a criminal act and held him culpable.

* * *

UNDER Philippine law, Smith belongs in Muntinlupa, where convicted criminals are remanded, even pending their appeal. His stay at the Makati City Jail is already a concession. If he is turned over to the US Embassy, that would be tantamount to ignoring the guilty verdict, as it would be like sending him back to the comforts of his home, the Embassy being US territory. What's to stop his embassy handlers from sneaking him out of the country in the dead of night? Why should we give him up now that we have possession of him?

Let's also remember that once the case is heard by the Court of Appeals, Nicole will be represented by the Office of the Solicitor General. Given the miserable record of executive offices in this case, do you think the OSG lawyers will be fighting tooth-and-nail to have Judge Pozon's decision upheld?

It is one thing not to exert one's utmost in representing a rape survivor, and another to subvert your nation's interests in exchange for a few pats on the back from your American patrons.

If Rizal were alive today

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo

WHEN PEOPLE ASK WHAT RIZAL WOULD HAVE been like if he had not been shot and lived beyond Dec. 30, 1896, the question opens a can of worms. While most of us want to make the hero in the image and likeness of what we can never even aspire to be, there are others who want Rizal to become human again. Instead of that recognizable name on textbooks and street signs or that figure immortalized in stone or bronze, always wearing or carrying a heavy overcoat that is so out of place in our tropical and humid country, people want a hero who is like them—for it is in Rizal's humanity that we actually are inspired to see our own capacity for greatness.

This is starting to sound like a Rizal Day speech inspired by the recent press conference presided over by Speaker Jose de Venecia. While the water-throwing incident between Vic Agustin and RC Constantino had allusions to the historic Cherie Gil-Sharon Cuneta scene in the movie "Bituing Walang Ningning," with the famous line, "You are nothing but a second-rate trying-hard copycat!" I was transfixed on the Speaker, with his trademark ears and weary tone, trying to simulate gravitas because some years ago he gave his own take on Rizal; he said that had Rizal been alive today, he would—true to form as a hero—solve all our problems be they political, economic, social or cultural. My own take on Rizal is that if he were alive and well today, he would be involved in politics and social issues—a guarantee that he would make good sound bytes and would surely be shot in the Luneta all over again for standing up for his convictions.

In order to know what Rizal would be like if he were alive today, one just has to read the four volume compilation of his correspondence to find out. It is unfortunate that most Filipinos will settle for a textbook on Rizal, when his letters are quite a revelation. Preparing for my Christmas column, I tried to track down his impressions of Christmas abroad and on how lonely it was to be an expatriate Filipino knowing that family and friends gather together for *Noche Buena*. I was looking for the letter where he describes falling snow, and even makes fun of himself by saying that it is not only the snow that falls in winter but people too. The streets are so slippery that even he has fallen on his butt due to the slush and ice. Although I have read these letters three or four times over, I still find something new in something old like a description of Christmas 1885 in Paris.

In a letter that requests prompt remittance of his allowance, including instructions that the family use the Shanghai Banking Corporation, (the bank that we know today as HSBC), there is a delightful description of children:

"Beginning with the 24th of December all the sidewalks of the boulevards are filled with *baraques*, or little stalls of toys, fruits, etc., like the Feria de Quiapo. (*baraque* is pronounced 'barac' whence *barraca*). A multitude of people stroll there—children, young and old. The government organizes entertainments for children only. Actors, actresses, and artists play gratis for the entertainment of the children who know how to reciprocate well this solicitude by behaving very considerately. I don't get tired admiring the education of French children. It seems like a fable when they are compared with the children there [in the Philippines] whether [these be] Spaniards or Filipinos. On the street, on the omnibus, in the carriages, in the promenades, at home, everywhere, they are well-behaved. They don't shout or cry. They don't bother [anyone else].

"This very morning, on the omnibus, there was a boy of about five seated on the lap of his mother, and he was very quiet and very formal, saying not a single word. After awhile another woman with another child almost of the same age came and they sat in front. The two boys looked at each other in silence without saying a word, but as the trip was long, they didn't remain silent. One started smiling and the other one also. One extended his hand smiling and half closing his eyes; the other took it and they started talking in their childish language and in a low voice. Later, one took out from under his coat a top and showed it to the other who examined it closely smiling and turned it with signs of satisfaction. They don't fight or shout.

"In the big bazaars where families go to do all kinds of shopping, there are immense halls full of beautiful toys competing for attention. Well, children go there, look and bear the tricks of wonderfully made dolls, mechanical toys, horses and many others, and you will not hear either a cry or a shot or a plea to their parents to buy them those toys. They think that if they behaved well during the year, on the morning of Dec. 25 [gifts] would come upon them, and if not all is well. The children of the poor go there to look at them only and they don't touch them or say a word in a loud voice; but those who see those little eyes can read what they feel in their hearts. This education seems to me a conclusive evidence in favor of the new system of educating a man in the love of good and his fellowmen."

If Rizal were alive in the Philippines today, he would still complain about Filipino children and their behavior. Like a stereotype unmarried snooty uncle, our national hero would not like children very much.

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo.edu

Good toys

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

"CHILDREN ARE SO LUCKY THESE DAYS," ONE OF MY friends muttered the other day as we walked through a bazaar. She was referring to the many toys, including quite a few low-cost ones, that have flooded the country.

But is all this really a blessing?

I'm finding it's actually more difficult now to find good toys, "good" being so many things. For starters, we need to go back to the original purposes of toys. Yes, they're meant for play, and for fun. But "play" itself has its social purposes: all societies have invented toys as a way of preparing children for the life ahead. The toys are there to stimulate their brains, sharpen their motor skills, develop manual dexterity. Toys and games together help the child to socialize. Why, toys even impart certain values.

I'll explain all that in a while; all that was just a starter to impress on you the immense responsibilities that come with choosing toys.

Safety

If it has become so difficult to choose toys, it's because so many toy manufacturers seem to have lost touch with the original uses of toys. Today, toys are big business, manufactured by huge multinationals based in the developed world but using cheap labor in Third World countries, particularly China.

Many of the toys are claimed to be educational but they are really designed to catch the attention of young kids, and their parents, with trite gimmicks. In this age of electronics, we're being dumped with toys that offer superficial razzle and dazzle with all their blinking lights and inane sounds. Cheap they are, but their life spans are also quite short—which, maybe, is just as well because they do little for the children.

Of even greater concern are the safety issues around many of these toys. Yesterday, the papers featured some warnings from the EcoWaste Coalition about toxic toys (e.g., those that have phthalates, chemicals which are suspected of causing cancer and kidney damage). The EcoWaste Coalition warns about PVC plastic, identifiable in some toys by a number "3" inside the recycling symbol.

The Coalition has other useful safety tips. Toys should be age-appropriate, with some toy manufacturers indicating the right age for their product. In some cases, all you need is common sense; for example, you don't give a basketball to a 4-year-old.

Toys shouldn't have small or loose parts that can be swallowed. Ask the emergency rooms of hospitals, and they'll tell you about all the kinds of things they've had to fish out of children's throats—from necklace beads to plastic screws.

Toys shouldn't have excessively long cords which might get entangled around toddlers' necks and cause strangulation. Avoid toys with sharp edges and points. Particularly important for Filipinos: avoid toys with loud sounds. I'd add here, avoid toys that suddenly play out loud sounds, especially if they come out from dolls. The problem isn't just damage to children's hearing but the psychological effect as well: those innocent-looking, moving Santa Clauses that go "Ho ho ho!" can actually scare very young children.

The EcoWaste coalition also warns about the toys' packaging: make sure to properly dispose of plastic wrappers and bags (which can suffocate a child), as well as the fillings like foam peanuts and paper strips, which they might end up eating, or aspirating.

PC toys

I'm not a fan of PC or political correctness, precisely because it often stops at using the right language. Let's take our principles a step further by applying them to the toys we buy. If we campaign against a toxic environment, then let's make sure we don't contribute to that pollution with our toys. For starters, let's recycle the toys. It's just so tempting now to keep buying new ones because there are so many available. When you see that cuddly stuffed animal, ask yourself if it's really for the kid or for yourself.

EcoWaste Coalition's guidelines on safe toys had one glaring omission: avoid toys that use batteries. Such toys contribute to environmental pollution because the batteries have small amounts of chemicals, such as mercury. Children don't need all those flashing lights and sounds; your voice and your smiles (okay, add a few hundred facial antics) delight them more than the electronics.

But children like things that move, you might argue. Well, you'd be surprised to find there are all kinds of mechanical toys that don't need batteries. My Yna's favorite toy was a colorful plastic duck mounted on a stick with wheels, its wings flapping as you roll it along. They're dirt cheap and are sold everywhere; I got Yna's in front of a church.

Values

Very early, too, Yna acquired a taste for "pullback" toy cars, so called because you pull them back and release them, and they zoom away like a Formula One car. She had seen a male cousin playing with one and I could tell she was totally fascinated so I got her one—much to the horror of relatives who said cars are only for little boys.

Toys reflect our values too, and as far as I'm concerned, Yna's going to play with cars just as her brother (yes, I have two now) gets to play with clay pots later. Maybe not dolls, but more because I just don't like the dolls being sold these days, the way they're all tied to TV productions. Or worse, other dolls, including Barbie, put too much emphasis on externals like fashions, even cosmetics. (Yes, there are dolls now which you put make-up on.)

The toys we get our kids send them very clear messages about what the world should be. One time in a handicraft store, I saw a kid picking up a rain stick. These are bamboo tubes filled with sand. When you turn the stick around, the sand trickles down and the sound resembles rain. It was clear he had never seen one. Then, in a flash, he had it figured out; he took it up, mounted it on his shoulder and began "firing." The rain stick had become a bazooka. I shuddered thinking of the kind of toys and TV fare he had gotten at home.

Rain sticks were originally Brazilian musical instruments, but they do make wonderful toys. So really toys aren't about brand names and glittery lights. Once, in preparation for a long trip, I got a fairly expensive educational toy for Yna. She took to it for three minutes, then abandoned it for another "toy" which kept her busy for the rest of the trip: a crumpled ball of aluminum foil.

Toys are us, if I might borrow from a trademark. Repairing and reusing old toys teach children about the value of recycling. Get kids to share toys, including donating toys to an orphanage, and we're teaching them about generosity. Buying a book instead of some kiddie gizmo teaches them about priorities. Improvising on a toy creates creativity and innovation. There's much more yet to toys and games, even a sense of fair play, like not grabbing someone's toy or changing the rules of a game mid-way.

Who knows, maybe, behind our politicians' antics, there are tales, too, of good toys and bad toys.

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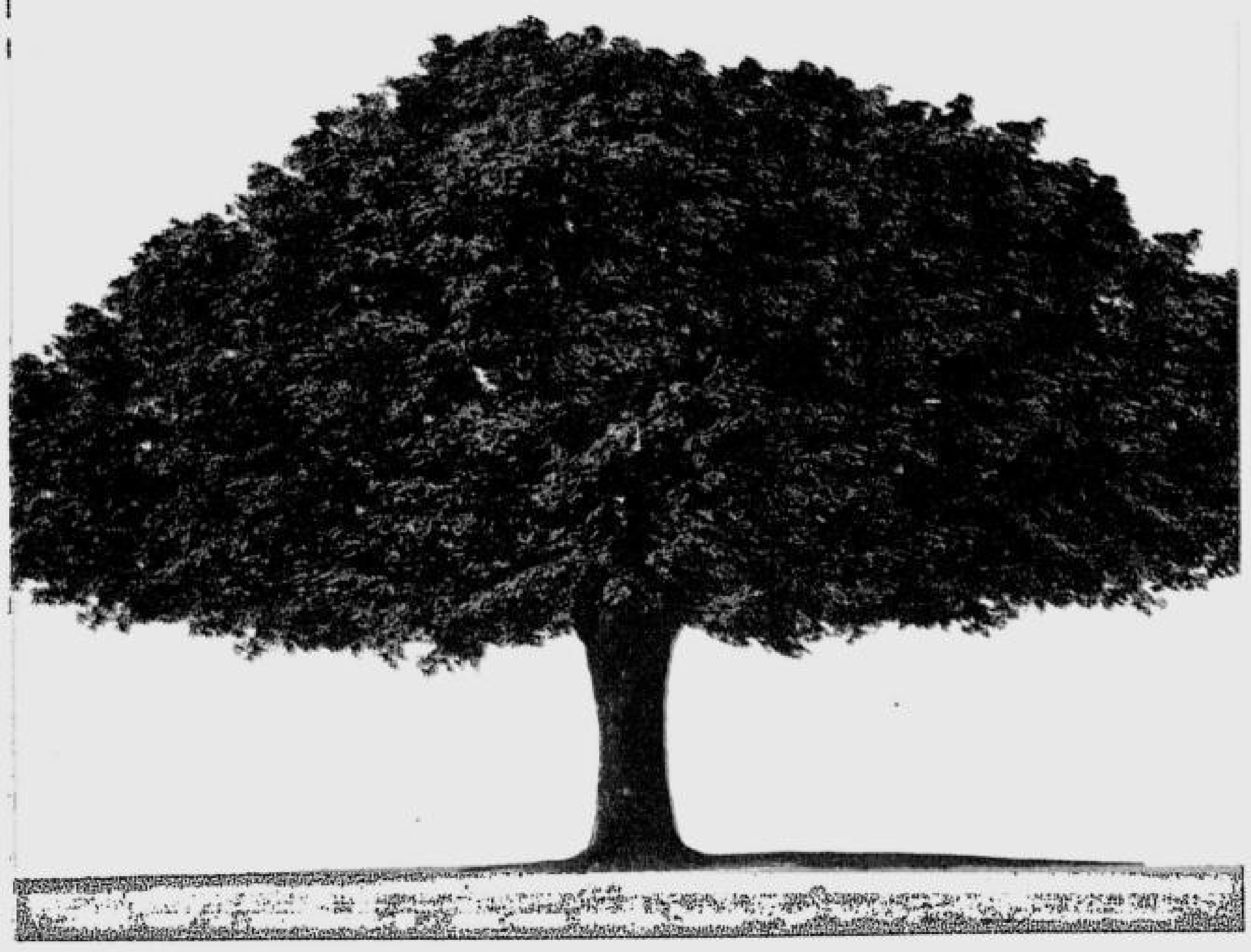
NEWSPAPER DRIVE INQUIRER



The worst kind of rapists

THE BRAZEN ATTEMPT OF THE HOUSE of Representatives to change our Constitution through a constituent assembly explicitly shows how rotten the moral values of our lawmakers are. In trying to railroad Charter change through a flawed and undemocratic process, they committed "bestial acts," the worst kind of abuse, against the Filipino people and thus joined the ranks of US soldier Daniel Smith.

Jose de Venecia's congressmen and the Filipino people have not come to an agreement on Con-ass as the mode of changing the Constitution. The House's Con-ass was not a consensual act between partners. In fact, the majority of Filipinos opposed and fought against the Con-ass, which was meant just to satisfy the ruling coalition's lust for power and wealth. It was in fact a unilateral act of a decaying institution—an act blessed no doubt by Malacañang—that would have imposed on the Filipino people a despotic government led by Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and De Venecia.

Truly, the words of Judge Benjamin Pozon on the Subic rape case can apply to our power-drunk legislators and GMA, who is riding on the Con-ass express but pretending not to be aware of what they are doing. Let me quote Pozon: "Rape is chilling naked sadism. It is marked by the savagery and brutality of the assault on the helpless victim."

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER LETTERS

Now we ask, what is more sadistic than for our legislators prioritizing their narrow political whims and caprices over the genuine interest and welfare of the people? What is more brutal and savage than for our so-called government leaders to badger us with endless maneuverings on Charter change while they disregard the grief, loss and suffering of the victims of the recent supertyphoons, as if to mock their dead?

Without doubt, they are rapists of the worst kind. They should be duly punished.

—EMMAN HIZON,
Freedom from Debt Coalition

Greeting elderly people

ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL TRAITS WE can possess is the instantaneous act of greeting elderly people.

For instance, my *kumpadre* (84 years old) and I (73 years old) were tinkering with the wonders of a sing-along component, dishing out some old songs, when a young, pretty neighbor came in. She cheerfully gave us a *beso-beso* not minding if we smelled like mud. You know, people often describe old people as "*amoy lupa na*" in local parlance.

Seriously speaking, the *beso-beso* was meant to show respect and concern for us. It made our day great for we realized that life can be beautiful because of the kindness and cheerfulness of caring people. In short, it can touch the heart.

—TEOFILO GUIANG, 20 Engineering St.,
GSIS Village, Brgy. Sangandaan,
Quezon City

Why no mention of first US war in Asia-Pacific?

IN THE INQUIRER ISSUE OF NOV. 28, A NEWS report from Washington noted that the war in Iraq has stretched longer than the time the Americans spent fighting during World War II. The report also listed down the other wars that America fought or got itself involved in. But nowhere in the list is there any mention of the Filipino-American war which lasted three years—from Feb. 4, 1899 (Battle of Pinaglabanan) to March 23, 1901 (when Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo was captured in Palanan, Isabela. (Fernandez, "A Brief History of the Philippines," 1951)

It appears that the US war in our country is longer than their shortest in the Persian Gulf—one and a half months (January-February 1991).

I dare to ask—why didn't the Washington report mention the first US involvement in the Asia-Pacific region? Was it a case of oversight or a deliberate omission of an uncalled for intrusion by a superpower into a small hapless country that was about to win a war against another foreign intruder?

—TEODORICO P. CUMAGUN JR.,
005 Brgy. Calamias, Lipa City
4217 Batangas

Flawed process in choosing UP deans?

WHO CHECKS ON THE CHANCELLOR AND the president of the University of the Philippines?

On Nov. 24, 2006, the UP board of regents (BOR) chose Dr. Virgildo Sabalo as the new dean of UP Visayas Tacloban College, upon the recommendation of UP Visayas Chancellor Glenn Aguilar and the UP president. The BOR proceeded to vote on the matter despite the fact the student regent had asked for a postponement because he needed more time to study the matter.

The board should review all pertinent documents and reconsider its choice in view of the following:

Although Dr. Sabalo has held administrative positions, he has not made a solo research, much less a published one. He is not an academic leader. He holds a bachelor's degree in agribusiness from the Visayas State College of Agriculture in Baybay, Leyte; a master's degree in business management from the UP Tacloban College; and a Ph.D. in human resource management from the University of San Jose-Recoletos, Cebu City.

The other nominee, Dr. Victorio N. Sugbo, holds a Ph.D. in communication, and master's degrees in the teaching of English as a second language, and in industrial relations from UP Diliman. He earned his bachelor's degrees in English and political science (magna cum laude) from the Divine Word University.

He is the highest ranking professor in UP Tacloban with many papers, creative works and books published in the Philippines and abroad. All those books are of single authorship. He has also held administrative positions in the college and directed national conferences.

UP Tacloban deserves a better dean.

—MICHAEL C. LANZA,
UPVTC Batch 2002,
On behalf of concerned UPVTC alumni

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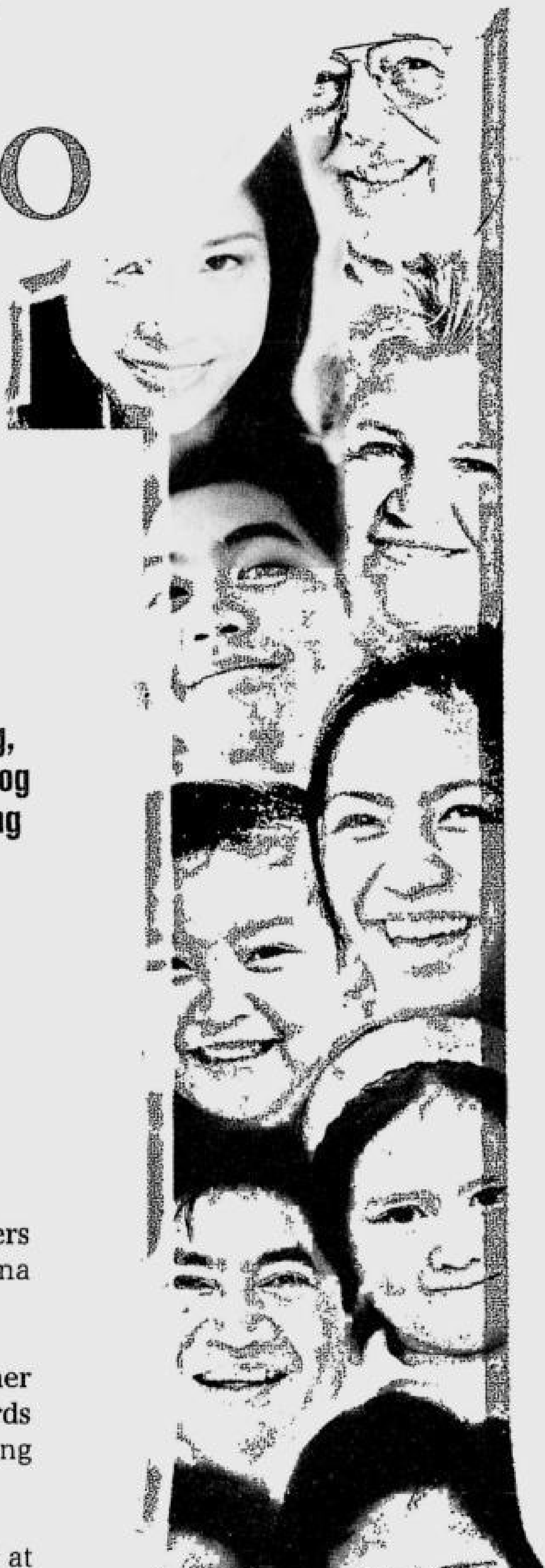

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CBCP wants local gov'ts to stop STL

SMALL Town Lottery (STL) in Iloilo province still operates despite opposition from Iloilo Gov. Niel Tupas and the Catholic Church. Governor Tupas urged the provincial police to be vigilant against STL.
ARNOLD ALMACEN/INQUIRER VISAYAS

By Yolanda Sotelo Fuertes,
Inquirer Northern Luzon
and Nestor P. Burgos
Inquirer Visayas

DAGUPAN CITY—THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONference of the Philippines is using the power of the pulpit in its campaign to put a stop to Small Town Lottery that it said was just jueteng in disguise.

The campaign against STL and state-sponsored gambling was acknowledged by a CBCP leader, Lingayen-Dagupan Archbishop Oscar Cruz, as a showcase in Pangasinan.

Cruz, national chair of the Krusadang Bayan Laban sa Sugal, said he was happy that Gov. Victor Agbayani and the provincial board had opposed the operations of STL in the province.

Agbayani earlier said he would like to sustain the gains of Cruz in his fight against gambling, prompting Vice Gov. Oscar Lambino to decide that the board would not entertain anymore any applications to operate STL.

"I'm very happy and thankful. I appreciate their collaboration on the fight against gambling," Cruz told the INQUIRER.

"We could at least showcase the province that we don't want STL," he said.

The CBCP has joined Cruz in his war on STL.

Jaro Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, CBCP president, issued an "urgent and ardent appeal" to local and national officials, citizens and business leaders to stop the government-backed numbers game.

The appeal, which was directed at those "involved in the same serious moral issue with socio-political undertones," was read in Catholic churches during Masses on Sunday. Catholic school directors were also told to circulate the statement to their teachers and students.

'...STL and jueteng...are a dangerous and insidious pairing...'

Stop STL

"Stop STL, please! It is another cause of corruption, another means of exploitation of the poor. The country has enough of these anti-social factors," Lagdameo said in his appeal.

"Whatever economic development our government shall have proudly achieved will be diminished or negated by the corruption and exploitation that accompany STL and jueteng," he said.

Lagdameo said while STL was legal, it was "not necessarily moral."

"And when something legal is paired with something illegal as jueteng, is this not, in fact, something illegal? And would our local and national officials promote any illegal operation in the country?" he said.

"To neglect to fight evil when one can do it, is no less a sin than to encourage it," Lagdameo said, quoting Pope Felix III.

He called STL as the legal cover for the illegal numbers game jueteng.

"The endorsement of STL simply means the promotion of jueteng. We were well appraised that all intelligent computations mathematically show STL will not survive financially without jueteng behind it," he said.

Dangerous pair

"STL and jueteng together is legal and illegal gambling combined. They are a dangerous and insidious pairing," he added.

In his blog (www.ovc.blogspot.com), Cruz, a former CBCP president, said STL "is there to cover up for jueteng and to play the bookies."

"Jueteng and bookies make STL profitable. Only big crooks, infamous characters and amoral personalities can swallow and live with such corrupt syndication," he said.

Lagdameo said STL and jueteng have the same operators and collectors and also have "the same poor victims and the same wealthy beneficiaries."

He said the poor become poorer while the "gambling *payola* recipients" become richer.

Police raid 'jueteng' den, arrest 11 suspects

CALAMBA CITY—THE CALABARzon police and the local police office raided a suspected jueteng den inside a subdivision here and arrested 11 alleged bet collectors, according to police.

Supt. Roland Bustos, city police chief, said his men and elements of the Regional Special Operations Group (RSOG), headed by Supt. James Brillantes, raided a house inside Dennis 1 Subdivision in Barangay 5.

He said the police operation came following a tip from an informant that several men were holding illegal numbers game draws in the area.

"The suspects were apparently trying to revive jueteng here through the guerrilla operations after we successfully stopped it several months ago," Bustos told the INQUIRER.

Arrested were Randy de Guzman, 22; Joselito Madlangbayan, 41; Rolando Ona, 22; Mateo Corpe, 57: Aurelio Torres, 44; Ben Baylon Jr., 43; Pablito Sulit, 34; Ron-ron Mandanas, 31; Evelyn Cuarto, 53; Gina Alcover, 33; and Alicia Delgado, 42.

Bustos said the suspects were caught while drawing the winning combination for the afternoon draw.

Confiscated from them were bet money, 11 bundles of lastillas, a columnar book, ballpens and calculators.

Also recovered were two motorcycles believed to be used by the suspects in the operations.

Before the raid, reports persisted that a group of jueteng operators from Bulacan and Pampanga was trying to start the resurgence of the underworld lottery in the Calabarzon region by talking with ranking police officials. *Marlon Ramos, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

8,000 residents turn up to make Meycauayan a city

MEYCAUAYAN, BULACAN—THEY lost six years ago but on Sunday, residents and officials made sure they would finally realize their dream to convert their town into a city.

Amid the rains, 8,247 residents voted "yes" to the cityhood bid of Meycauayan while 5,728 voted "no."

Voting in more than 500 precincts in 26 villages started at 7 a.m. and ended at 3 p.m. The counting and official tallies were completed by the Commission on Elections at 10 p.m.

Supt. Fernando Villanueva, police chief here, said about 40 policemen from the provincial police headquarters in Camp Alejo Santos were deployed to ensure a "successful and orderly" plebiscite.

No untoward incident was reported, he said.

Comelec officials said 13,975 villagers voted, which was 11.72 percent of the 119,233 registered voters here.

From the 26 villages, Barangays Bancal and Zamora voted against the cityhood despite an intense information campaign conducted by Mayor Eduardo Alarilla urging the residents to approve the bid.

He said the economy of Meycauayan, which is famous for its jewelry and leather industries, will be boosted when it becomes a city.

The law (Republic Act 9356) converting Meycauayan into a component city was signed by President Macapagal-Arroyo on Oct. 2.

In March 2001, residents junked the first bid for the cityhood and local officials said the loss was due to the limited time to conduct an information drive.

Abelardo Aban, former president of Meycauayan tricycle drivers' group, said the new city could expect bigger revenue allotments and other funds that could boost its economy.

In September 2000, San Jose del Monte became the first component city of Bulacan.

Malolos should have been the first city in the province but its residents junked the bid during a plebiscite in December 1999.

It only became a component city when former Mayor Resty Roque gathered signatures favoring the bid and appealed the loss to the Comelec.

Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos issued a ruling, favoring the conversion in October 2001. *Carmela Reyes, Inquirer Central Luzon*

MILF accuses Army of attack, files truce violation case

COTABATO CITY—The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) has filed another protest against the military for allegedly attacking one of its camps in Basilan on Sunday morning.

Last month, the rebel group also filed similar complaints against the military for the Maguindanao clashes.

A ranking military official in Basilan has confirmed that soldiers clashed with an armed group—which it described as supportive of the Abu Sayyaf—in the hinterlands of Sumisip town on Sunday morning.

Brig. Gen. Reynard Javier, commander of the Army's 103rd Infantry Brigade, said his troops were on patrol when they chanced upon several armed men around 6 a.m.

A MILF guerrilla displays a grenade launcher in a guerrilla camp in Shariff Aguak, Maguindanao. JEOFFREY MAITEM/INQUIRER MINDANAO

He said a soldier was wounded in the clash.

"We suffered one injury. We've learned the other group also suffered one casualty," Javier told the INQUIRER in a mobile phone interview.

Eid Kabalu, MILF spokesperson, said elements of 51st Infantry Battalion, backed by militiamen, harassed MILF rebels under Moctar Mingkong, who were encamped in Barangay Pamatsaken in Sumisip town.

He said Mingkong's men were forced to return fire when soldiers started shooting at them. He said two Army soldiers were injured in the encounter.

"Apparently, they attacked our position. This is a violation of our existing truce," Kabalu said.

Kabalu said the latest incident only proved the MILF suspicion that the military has been trying to disrupt the peace process.

But Javier said Mingkong is already regarded as an Abu Sayyaf supporter because, during the Dos Palmas hostage taking crisis, he helped the group of Khadaffy Janjalani.

"We consider him a lawless element," Javier said. *Jeoffrey Maitem and Julie Alipala, Inquirer Mindanao*

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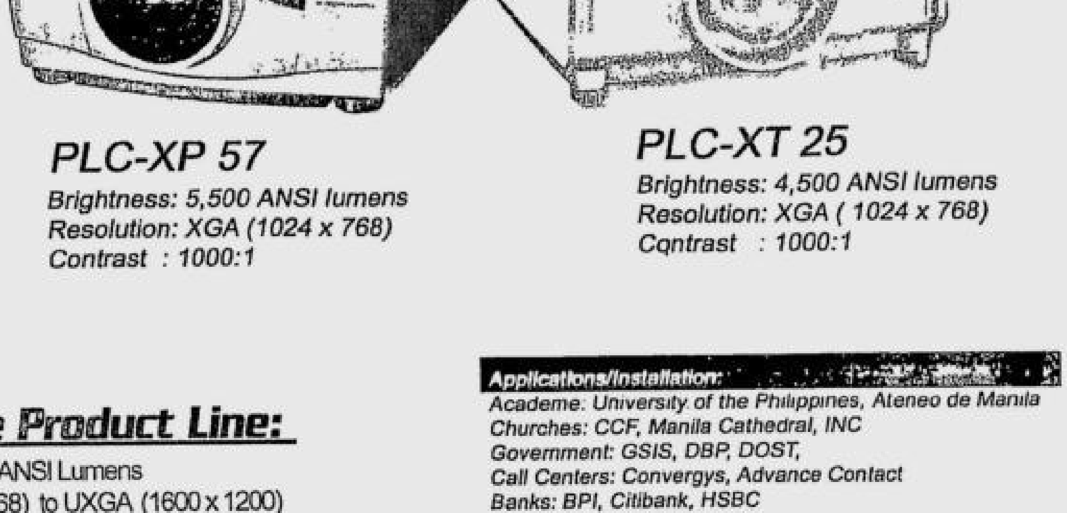

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₱400M in piracy gadget seized

By Marlon Ramos
Inquirer Southern Luzon

BIÑAN, LAGUNA—AGENTS OF the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) raided a warehouse inside the Laguna International Industrial Park (LIIP) here on Tuesday and confiscated P400 million worth of replicating machines used in producing pirated compact discs and DVDs.

Lawyer Noel Morales, head of the raiding team, said they swooped down on the storage facility along Ganado Street, Barangay Mamplasan at around 6 a.m.

"These machines are used to reproduce DVDs and audio and video CDs," Morales told the INQUIRER.

The raid was made on instructions of NBI director Pedro Bulaong.

Morales said they arrested 13 Chinese nationals who were caught while operating eight machines.

"The suspects looked surprised when we entered here," said Rey Arellano, NBI special investigator.

Of the 13 arrested suspects, only a certain Peter has been identified.

The suspects could understand neither Filipino nor English.

Morales said the suspects, who are believed to be in their early 20s, failed to present work permits.

He said a certain Willy Lao was the alleged owner of the machines.

The warehouse, registered to Bright Future Technologies, along Ganado Street was actually the same establishment raided by the regional special operations group of the Calabarzon police and the Optical Media Board (OMB) on April 3, 2005.

The operation was one of the biggest and most successful campaigns of the government against piracy.

More than P600 million worth of replicating machines were seized in the previous raid while 11 Chinese nationals were arrested.

President Macapagal-Arroyo went to the area and led the inspection of the confiscated items.

Director Jesus Verzosa, chief of the Criminal Detection and Investigation Group (CIDG) and former director of the Calabarzon police, was surprised when told that the warehouse was again raided, this time by the NBI agents.

He said after they filed the criminal cases against, the counsels of the arrested suspects won their petition to quash the search warrant.

The court then ordered the police to return the confiscated machines to the suspects.

He said Sony Entertainment Company-Japan was the complainant in the case.

"Apparently, the (respondents) were able to show legal documents allowing them to produce CDs. But they don't have any permit to reproduce (materials) owned by Sony," he said in a mobile phone interview.

Arellano said they conducted the raid after a three-month surveillance on traders supplying pirated discs in Quiapo, Manila yielded positive results.

He said the suspects deliver the contraband to Quiapo at least twice a week.

He said agents are puzzled how the suspects were able to acquire a mayor's permit from the local government of Biñan despite the fact that the place has already been raided by the police.

THE ISLAND of Boracay was hit by Typhoon Seniang Sunday, flooding streets in Barangay Manok-manok. ARNOLD ALMACEN/INQUIRER VISAYAS

Seniang death toll in Visayas increases to 16

By Ven S. Labro, Joey A. Gabieta and Jhunnex Napallacan
Inquirer Visayas

TACLOBAN CITY—THE NUMBER OF FATALITIES in the different areas hit by Typhoon Seniang reached 16 as of yesterday.

In Eastern Visayas, the fatalities rose to five after two persons were reported dead in Caibiran, Biliran and another two in Barugo and Carigara towns in Leyte. The authorities earlier identified the first fatality as four-year-old girl April Felicin, who was pinned to death in Tacloban City on Saturday at the height of the typhoon.

The additional casualties were identified as Pag Gaspang Alcober of Barugo town and Alejandro Ramirez of Babatngon town in Leyte, and Marcelo Sinangote and Berit Deroteo of Caibiran town, Biliran.

Alcober and Ramirez died when a tree fell on them while Sinangote and Deroteo drowned in floods.

Five of the nine missing fishermen of fishing boat Linda J were confirmed dead when rescuers recovered their bodies, fishing boat owner San Remegio Cebu Vice Mayor Pablito Olivar said.

The five bodies were found separately in Placer, Kawayan and Milagros, Masbate, Olivar said.

The crewmen of the five other fishing boats were rescued earlier, except for Joel Dignos of fishing boat Julita, who died at the height of the typhoon.

In Capiz, the number of fatalities rose to five: Wilfredo Zaballero,16, of Gabuc Pontevedra, Capiz; one-and-a-half-year-old Angeline Besana, of Bago Chiquito Panay, Capiz; three-year-old Jonard Adremesin; mother Delly and grandfather Pacquito Recto, all of Barangay Kanhalon, San Fernando, Romblon.

Zaballero died when the motorized banca he was riding with his mother capsized while the four casualties reported earlier died when an inter-island boat capsized at Culasi Port.

The local government units of the different areas hit by the typhoon declared a state of calamity.

Tacloban City and Biliran were placed under a state of calamity.

Various areas in the provinces of Biliran, Leyte and Capiz remain underwater while some areas did not have any electricity yet.

The National Transmission Corp. (TransCo) reported that 24 of its transmission towers were destroyed by the typhoon in Leyte and Samar.

GSIS loan payments in Bicol suspended

THE GOVERNMENT SERVICE INSURANCE SYSTEM (GSIS) is implementing a five-month moratorium on all loan payments for GSIS members in Albay, Camarines Sur, and Catanduanes.

In Resolution No. 181, the GSIS Board of Trustees said the GSIS will stop accepting collections for all loan payments in these provinces from December 2006 to April 2007.

In a statement, the GSIS said loan payments will resume in May next year.

The moratorium is meant to ease the difficulty of GSIS members in these provinces, which were ravaged by Supertyphoon Reming last week.

The statement quoted GSIS President and General Manager Winston Garcia as saying the GSIS will offer a new loan program for members in these areas.

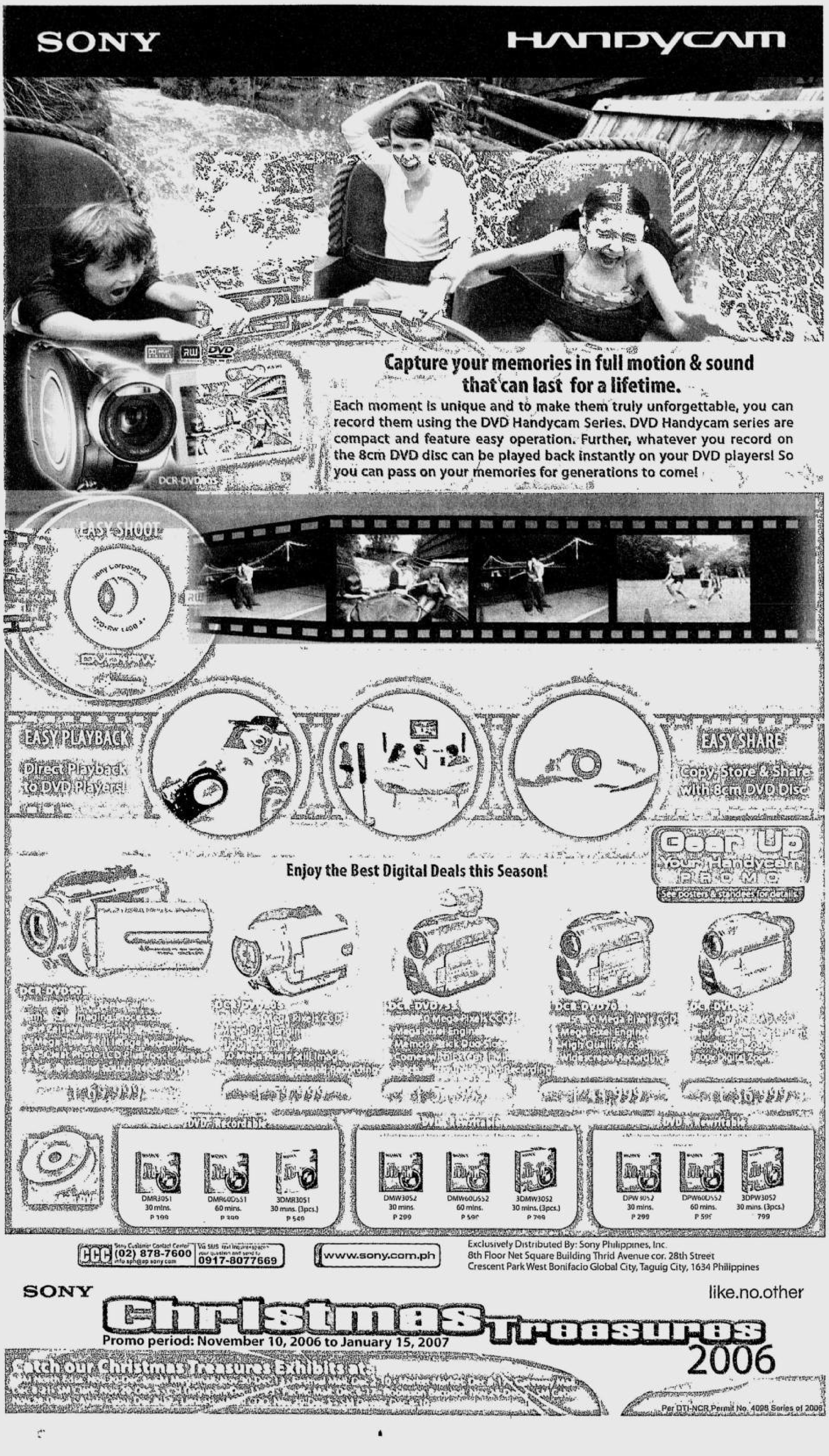
Called the GSIS Consolidated Salary Loan Program, or the Conso-Loan, the loan program is similar to the GSIS salary loans.

However, Conso-Loan adds two more months in the loanable amount of the member.

Apart from its higher proceeds, Conso-Loan offers longer repayment period and lower amortization.

The Conso-Loan, likewise, consolidates the emergency loan assistance and salary loans of members. It also automatically waives penalties and surcharges members may have with these loan programs.

Garcia appealed to all government agencies in these provinces not to implement GSIS loan deductions in the paychecks of GSIS members there.



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INQUIRER Northern Luzon

Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Rolando B. Fernandez

Ilocos cuisine ready for int'l market

By Cristina Arzadon
Vigan City

BALIKBAYAN ROSCHELLIE Agatep Corr wants the Filipino cuisine to carve a name in the international culinary market and she's taking it off with the unique Ilocos taste as a culinary springboard to the world.

And since it is the season of family gatherings, Corr launched a two-day culinary event dubbed "Mangan Tayon! (Let's Eat)" last week to celebrate Ilocos Sur's popular cuisine, like *bagnet, longganiza, pinakbet, dinakdakan* and *empanada* and native delicacies, like *tinubong, calamay* and *bibingka*.

The event gathered more than 30 food establishments at the historic Plaza Burgos in Vigan City and showcased various food creations that are unique in the Ilocos. It featured Baguio chefs John Carlo Lachica, Aldrin Amat and Wilmur Kinomes, who whipped up their versions of *longganiza* tacos and *bagnetpadas* pizza.

Corr, who was born in Vigan but regularly travels around the world, gripes that the Filipino cuisine is supposedly a disenfranchised entity compared to its other Asian counterparts.

She left the Philippines in 1974 and returned in 2000 when she took over her family's real estate business. She has since expanded the enterprise to media production and serves as executive producer of the documentary program "Wake up, Ilocos."

"I have traveled extensively and I can't find [walking the block] a visible Filipino cuisine. If I do find it, it's off the beaten track. It is not as mainstream as Malaysian, Vietnamese, Chinese, Indonesian or Thai food," Corr says.

Overlooked

That the Filipino cuisine seemed to be overlooked is largely due to lack of exposure and support, she adds.

"There's no reason for it to be disenfranchised. The beauty of Ilocos cuisine is that there's a lot of history behind it. It is very intimate and family-oriented," she says.

"[Mangan Tayon!] is just a springboard to promote Ilocos … I would use the most acceptable dimension which is food, which is eating."

She could not hide her disappointment when she failed to draw media exposure when she introduced her food festival project last month in Quezon City.

She brought sample packages of Ilocos food products during the media briefing, hoping to generate support from the Metro Manila-based media.

"As impressive as the media turnout was, there has not been a single article written about the event from any of the reporters present that day," Corr said in an e-mail to the INQUIRER.

"The beauty, heritage and tasteful variety of the Filipino cuisine have been unfairly compromised due to lack of support and attention. The lack of media exposure [from the briefing] regretfully validates this observation," she said.

Pinoy exposure

Through her own media production, Corr started embarking on what she described as "Operation Pinoy Exposure" to promote Ilocos Sur through its food and native products.

Her TV program documented the event and will be marketed internationally.

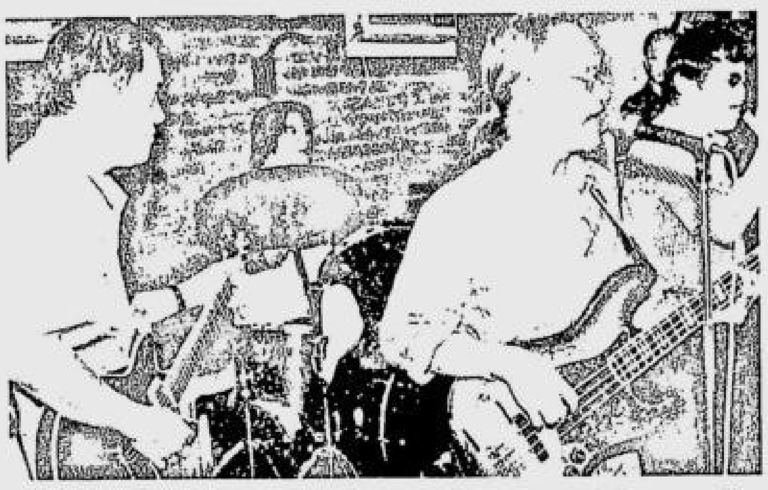
"I call this whole operation as operation Filipino exposure. It is about gaining respect. We are kind, sincere and beautiful. We just need to be lifted up, " she says.

"We're not getting the support and chance. Everyday, what [people] are looking at is just how to survive. It's unfair."

She got the support of Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson who provided the booths for the two-day festival and helped draw funding support from the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp.

Singson showed up during the closing ceremonies and helped chef Tristan Encarnacion, resident chef of GMA 7's morning show "Unang Hirit," whip up their version of *teriyaki bagnet* made of *longganiza, ukoy* (crispy shrimp snack) and *empanada* wrapper.

VIGAN "longganiza" (native pork sausage) and "bagnet" (deep-fried pork chunks) are among Ilocos Sur's top selling delicacies.
LEONCIO BALBIN JR.



THE BOSSINGS Band plays old favorites for music lovers in Dagupan City.
RAY B. ZAMBRANO

They're bosses by day, musicians by night

By Gabriel Cardinoza
Dagupan City

MEET THE "BOSSINGS." TEN YEARS AGO, they were just a nameless, after-office-hours group of friends holding jam sessions in a garage at a posh subdivision in Dagupan City. They gathered simply "for the love music, period."

With acoustic guitars and table tops as improvised percussion instruments then, they traveled down memory lane and enjoyed the music of the '60s, '70s and '80s.

Today, despite their hectic individual schedules, they play regularly at Ragtime, one of the more popular bars in Dagupan, and Bossings continues to make a name among yuppies and the not-too-young here.

"We never really expected we would go this far," said former Pangasinan Board Member Roger Law, bassist, one of the only three remaining original members of the group.

"When Edsa died, we thought Bossings would die with him, too. But we decided that the show must go on and we are doing this in his memory," Law added. Edsa is Ed Zarate, a manager of an insurance company then, who was the band leader. He died in 2003.

Lawyer Raffy Villamil, another original member, recalled that Zarate would patiently call his law office to remind him of their get-together at their house at Di-Or Village in Dagupan. "Before we knew it, we were already singing several songs and we had a repertoire," he said.

It was then, he said, that the group agreed to buy its own musical instruments and decided it should perform somewhere else.

Law said it was Zarate who named the band "Bossings" because "we were all bosses."

Aside from the two, the original members included businessman Juancho Benin (guitarist), bank executive Ping Coquia (guitarist) and Dr. Winnie Fernandez, keyboard player. Coquia and Fernandez would leave the group in 1999 because they were too busy with their jobs.

Typical night

On a typical night, Bossings' repertoire includes songs of Gerry and the Peacemakers, Peter and Gordon, Dave Clark 5, Gary Lewis and the Playboys, Everly Brothers, Chad and Jeremy, The Tutors, and, yes, The Beatles.

"This is our music and we continue to be inspired by The Beatles," said Robert Erfe-Mejia, drummer, head of the city government's public order and safety office.

They also play Santana, Ventures and bossa nova, a Brazilian music style.

Mejia described their audience as "very volatile, sometimes, unpredictable."

"Sometimes, we get a crowd na *puro may edad*, 30s and above. But lately we've had younger audiences, and even families. For the past year and a half, 20 [years old] and below are even coming. They appreciate the music maybe because *nauso nga yong* revival music," Mejia said.

What always thrills them, he said, is when a guest would volunteer to sing. And they had this with government officials, military and police officers, and other professionals.

Proud moments

Law said that aside from Ragtime, Bossings had been invited to play on various occasions in Pangasinan. The more memorable, he said, was during the golden wedding anniversary celebration of Benin's parents.

"We sang back-to-back with the Side A band," Law said. Benin's brother, Joey, is a member of Side A.

The group would later have similar performances with True Faith, and another with the legendary rock band Sampaguita.

Today, Bossings is composed of Law, Benin, Villamil, Mejia, Al Tinonas, a musician, Edward Cham, a businessman-engineer, Jigs Seen, a businessman, Mel Angeles, a music teacher, and Dits Quijardo, a retired police superintendent. They are all in their mid-50s.

Local broadcaster Rudy Estrada, a fan, said the group sings just like the songs' original artists.

"*Plakang-plaka* (It's like listening to the actual record)," he said.

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'Caring, sharing' 250-truck caravan makes 4 stops

By Christine O. Avendaño, Nikko Dizon and Tarra V. Quismundo

CARPENTERS, LINEMEN, MASONS, clearing crews and doctors were part of the convoy of some 250 trucks laden with relief goods that left Manila yesterday on a mercy mission for the typhoon-ravaged Bicol region.

The presence of a Huey helicopter overhead and of police and military escorts on the ground highlighted the importance, if not the urgency, of the mission.

The trucks were loaded with P200 million worth of goods for the victims of Supertyphoon "Reming" that battered the country on Nov. 30, leaving 1,500 killed or missing, mostly in Albay, after mudslides and floodwaters swamped their villages.

The typhoon destroyed thousands of houses and schools and toppled power and telephone lines. Two weeks after Reming slammed into the country, many parts of the Bicol region are still without electricity.

Reming displaced more than 100,000 people and destroyed P4.48 billion worth of crops and infrastructure.

With a wave and a smile, President Macapagal-Arroyo sent off the Palace-initiated caravan that was expected to reach today thousands of families in the Bicol provinces.

The convoy, which included fire trucks that will provide water to waterless communities, left the Central Business Park on the Diosdado Macapagal Highway in Pasay City in batches of 20 and at five-minute intervals.

Other relief goods were sent to the Bicol region by air at the nearby Villamor Air Base.

C-130 aircraft for Virac

The Philippine Air Force dispatched yesterday morning two C-130 aircraft to Catanduanes and Albay to deliver the goods, including drinking water, donated by the government and the private sector.

A total of 26,925 lbs. of assorted items—from blankets and sleeping bags to medicines and a water purifier—were flown to Virac, the capital town of the island province of Catanduanes where Reming made landfall with gusts of 265 kilometers per hour. Reming killed at least 12 people and injured 100 others in the province.

"I want every Filipino family to know that their government is ready to serve them in times of extreme distress when food, clean water, warm clothing and shelter cannot be normally availed of," the President said in a statement she later issued.

"Your President and the entire Cabinet feel your pain and we will do all we can to gather the energies and resources of the nation to help you," she said.

MALACAÑANG TO BICOL MERCY MISSION
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
EDWIN BACASMAS

MERCY MISSION: On Tuesday, President Arroyo supervised the dispatch of a convoy of relief goods from Malacañang to the disaster-stricken areas in Albay province.

P10 billion for relief, rehab

She said the government would allocate P10 billion for the relief and rehabilitation of not only the Bicol provinces battered by Reming but other provinces hit by other typhoons over the past two months.

Malacañang has already asked Congress to allocate the special fund from nonpriority projects under the proposed 2007 national budget, which the House of Representatives and the Senate are expected to approve before they go on Christmas break next week.

Dr. Anthony Golez, deputy administrator of the Office of Civil Defense, said the President was elated that the government and the private sector were able to put together the caravan in just a matter of days.

Among the private companies that participated in the caravan were the Filipino Chinese Federation, Manila Water, Maynilad, San Miguel Corp., Mirant, Purefoods, Unilever and the Lucio Tan Group.

Four stops

Golez said that the caravan would make four stops—in Lucena, in Camarines Sur (Togugung in Sta. Elena and in Pili) and in Legaspi City, Albay. Except for Pili where an overnight stay was expected, the trucks would make 15-minute stops in each destination.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita told reporters that the caravan was Ms Arroyo's idea and that she and her officials began to plan for this starting Dec. 9.

"Somehow it's a good thing that the [Asean] summit [in Cebu] was postponed because of [Typhoon] 'Seniang' as the President was able to focus on and have the time to organize the mercy mission to Bicol," Ermita said.

A state of calamity was declared in the provinces of Aklan and Leyte in the wake of Seniang. *(See story on Page A18.)* The typhoon pummeled the Visayas over the weekend.

"We have 248 vehicles and still counting," Ermita said, noting there were 44 government agencies and 16 nongovernment organizations that were participating in the caravan.

Even if the trucks bore banners identifying them as part of the"Malacañang to Bicol Mercy Mission," caravan, Ms Arroyo was calling it the "Caring and Sharing Caravan."

"I am naming it the Sharing and Caring Caravan as a tribute to our theme in the Asean summit that has been postponed to January next year," the President said.

She was referring to the government decision to postpone last weekend its hosting of the 12th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) Summit in Cebu because of Seniang.

Ermita said the trucks were expected to get to their destinations by 10 a.m. today. Golez and Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya were tasked with leading the caravan.

Family packs

Each family would be given a "family pack," which is good for one week's consumption, according to Golez.

A "family pack" contains food items like canned goods, coffee, milk, noodles, drinking water and rice. Nonfood items include soap bars, toothpaste and clothing.

Aside from goods, the trucks carry personnel who will provide services to the battered provinces.

Payloaders, backhoes, water tankers

Part of the caravan are a team of doctors, a group of linemen from Manila Electric Co. and personnel from the Metro Manila Development Authority. The linemen are expected to help restore power in Albay, while the MMDA personnel will help clear roads and rebuild homes.

MMDA General Manager Robert Nacianceno said the agency sent a contingent of 269 personnel, including carpenters, masons and clearing crews.

The aid convoy will head straight for Legazpi City, among the worst hit by Reming.

The MMDA personnel will use payloaders, backhoes and trucks mounted with lights in clearing roads. The team brought some 6,000 galvanized iron sheets for the rebuilding of homes. The agency also sent sound trucks to serve as a public information system, and water tankers to dispense water in evacuation areas.

Local gov'ts help

The MMDA personnel and equipment will stay in Bicol for at least a week. "This is the first time we took part in a humanitarian mission of this magnitude," Nacianceno said.

Local governments contributed to the mission by sending 22 trucks.

Last week, the Makati city government sent P5 million for victims of the typhoon, an amount that local officials in Bicol may use "to provide victims with food, clothing and other materials," Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay said.

Sacks of rice, sardines

The donations brought by a C-130 aircraft to Catanduanes came from various nongovernment organizations and the Department of Social Welfare and Development, according to Capt. Joselito Munar of the Air Force Public Information Office.

Munar said the other C-130 carried a total of 19,998 lbs. of sacks of rice, mineral water, boxes of sardines and used clothing for the typhoon victims in Legazpi City.

The cargo for Legazpi consisted of donations collected by Manila Broadcasting Corp. and airport authority security chief, retired Gen. Angel Atutubo, Munar said.

Even as the caravan made its way to the Bicol region, government employees were reminded that the relief goods may not be enough and were encouraged to keep on helping. *With a report from Leila B. Salaverria*

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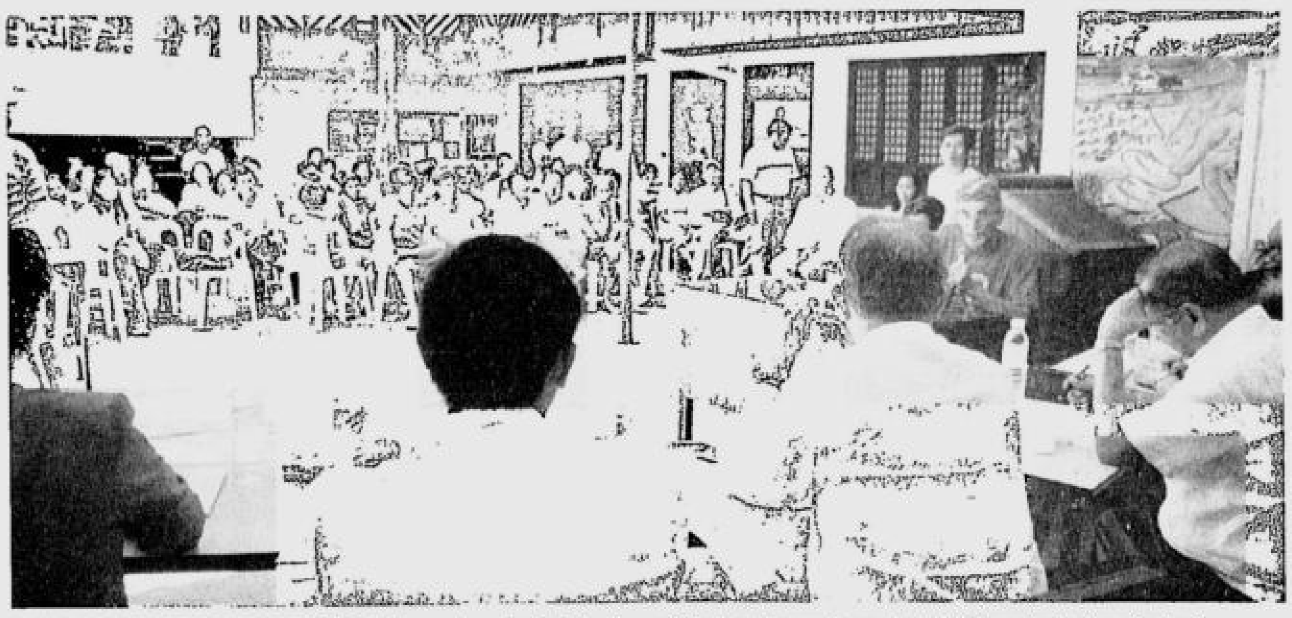
Rights lawyer, Bayan Muna member shot dead

CRYING OUT FOR JUSTICE, Marianit Vigo (left) and Norma Alave, the mothers of George and Maricel Vigo, attend the hearings of the Melo Commission. DENNIS JAY SANTOS/INQUIRER MINDANAO



MELO COMMISSION IN DAVAO: The probers look into the political and agrarian-related killings including that of journalist couple George and Maricel Vigo, who were murdered in June and orphaned 5 children. After the hearings, commission chair retired Justice Jose Melo said it still has no clear leads as to the Vigos' killers. DENNIS JAY SANTOS/INQUIRER MINDANAO

From page A1

Amnesty International, have expressed concern over the unabated killings.

To run for Congress

A former member of the provincial board, Gojol recently announced his intention to run as congressman in Sorsogon's first district. He was the lawyer of the militant group Bayan Muna and was also handling land cases for the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP).

Gojol was ambushed at 9:45 a.m. as he was returning to Sorsogon City after attending a court hearing in Gubat.

Gojol's driver, Danilo France, was also killed in the attack.

Investigator SPO3 Roque Fundemera said three assailants on an unmarked motorcycle tailed Gojol as he left the court on board a maroon van.

Upon reaching Barangay San Ignacio, near an Army detachment, the gunmen blocked the van and shot the driver, police said, quoting witnesses in the area.

Fundemera said Gojol might have tried to flee but was shot in the buttocks and fell on his face near a house.

No inkling

His attackers finished him off with a shot in the head.

Gojol suffered gunshot wounds in the head, body and foot. Empty shells from a .45 cal. pistol were found at the scene.

Gojol's associates, including fellow lawyer Joven Laura, secretary of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines-Sorsogon chapter, said they were with Gojol at the court minutes before the killing and never had any inkling of the attack that was coming.

Frivaldo was shot late Monday afternoon by unidentified assassins in Irosin town, 42 km from this city.

Police said they still had no suspects in Frivaldo's killing.

Brother also murdered

Intelligence chief Senior Insp. Ramon Esico said the gunmen barged into Frivaldo's house and shot him repeatedly.

The victim was the younger brother of Irosin Councilor Max Frivaldo, also a Bayan Muna member who was also shot dead by two unidentified suspects in his house early this year.

The killing of the elder Frivaldo is still unsolved.

Irosin has been the scene of a number of killings, most of which have gone unsolved. Among the latest was the fatal shooting of an Army captain on Nov. 27.

Death squads

Local officials have held prayer rallies to appeal for an end to the killings.

"The death squads just waited for the Asean delegates to leave so as not to embarrass Gloria. This is an obvious trend in political killings," KMP information officer Carl Ala said of the latest murders.

The 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) was to have held a summit in Cebu on Monday but this was cancelled by Philippine officials, citing the approach of Typhoon "Seniang" as the reason.

Amid international concern over the killings, Malacañang recently formed the Melo Commission to investigate them and submit recommendations to Ms Arroyo.

Not enough evidence

The commission on Monday held a hearing in Davao City on political and agrarian-related killings in Mindanao but its witnesses failed to give enough evidence that would help the commission identify the masterminds, panel officials said.

"The court will not arraign (the case) because there is no person identified," Justice Jose Melo told the INQUIRER after the hearing.

A witness, who is a friend of the murdered couple George and Maricel Vigo, both part-time broadcast journalists, recounted to the commission his last contact with the Vigos before they were ambushed in Kidapawan City in June.

The witness, who requested not to be identified by the media, told the commissioners that the Vigos had told him about threats to their lives. *With reports from Blanche S. Rivera, Juan Escandor Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon, and Dennis Jay C. Santos, Inquirer Mindanao*

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Day 2 December 16, 2006
10:30 AM - **Go Negosyo Day 1 Highlights** • 11:50 AM - **Awarding of the Inspiring OFW Entrepreneurs** • 12:00 NN - **FORUM 5: Go Negosyo, Negosyanteng OFW! (The Inspiring Entrepreneurs Forum)** • 12:45 PM - **Barcelona Movie Screening** • 2:45 PM - **FORUM 6: Pagpapatakbo ng Negosyo, Habang Ako'y Nasa Ibayo (Running a Long-Distance Business)** • 3:35 PM - **Testimony of Sandy Javier of Andok's Manok** • 3:55 PM - **FORUM 7: Pagpapahalaga Sa Sarili, Pamilya At Bayan; Susi Sa Pangmatagalang Tagumpay At Makabuluhang Negosyo** • 6:00 PM - **Game Show With Celebrities** • 7:30 PM - **Market! Market! Simbang Gabi**

Day 3 December 17, 2006
10:30 AM - **Go Negosyo Day 1 and Day 2 Highlights** • 12:00 NN - **Game Show With Celebrities** • 1:00 PM - **Sponsors' Segment** • 3:00 PM - **The Franchise Advantage - The Philippine Franchise Association (PFA)** • 6:00 PM - **Game Show With Celebrities** • 7:30 PM - **Market! Market! Simbang Gabi**

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Journalist group condemns mediamen who 'ganged up' on activist

THE NATIONAL Union of Journalists of the Philippines yesterday condemned columnists and other members of the media who reportedly "ganged up" on activist Renato Constantino Jr. during a press conference of pro-Charter Change congressmen over the weekend.

"The (NUJP) is embarrassed and saddened by the ill-judged and unconscionable behavior shown by some colleagues in the media who ganged up on activist Renato Constantino Jr.," the group said in a statement.

During the news conference held on Saturday at the Dusit Hotel in Makati, Constantino berated House Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. and his colleagues, calling them "serial rapists" for allegedly railroading amendments to the Constitution.

Several columnists and journalists who were at the press briefing were caught on camera yelling at Constantino.

As security officers led Constantino out of the room, the INQUIRER's business columnist Victor Agustin threw water on Constantino's face. The pair nearly resorted to fisticuffs.

The NUJP described the incident as "tragic" and reminded their media colleagues about the rights of individuals to free expression.

"For how can we, who invoke press freedom and the right to free expression in the exercise of our calling, even deign to prevent others, especially citizens who actually own these freedoms, from exercising these rights?" the NUJP added. *Marlon Ramos and Delfin T. Mallari Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon*

RP gains against corruption lauded

SIGNIFICANT REforms have been achieved in the Philippine government's campaign to stamp out corruption, according to a top official of Transparency International (TI)-Berlin.

In a news release, Huguette Labelle, chair of TI-Berlin's board of directors, was reported to have acknowledged the positive development to Dr. Constancia de Guzman, chair of the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission.

The two women met after the sessions of the Conference of Parties to the UN Convention Against Corruption being held at the King Hussein Bin Talal Convention Center, Dead Sea, Jordan. The sessions, which started on Dec. 10, will be concluded on Dec. 14.

Prior to the meeting, De Guzman, a member of the Philippine delegation to the conference, read the Philippine Statement on the Interventions on Anti-Corruption to more than 700 delegates from over 80 countries.

Labelle was reportedly more open to discussing an alternative manner of presenting the TI report after the reading of the Philippine statement.

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2 golds for RP in Doha Asian Games

From page A1

medal drought in tennis by winning bronzes in the men's singles and in his partnership with Eric Taino in the men's doubles.

The victories of Payla and Gabica, as well as De Luna's runner-up finish, boosted the Philippines' medal harvest to 2-4-8 (gold-silver-bronze) 12 days through the 15-day, 45-nation Games.

"I knew I had a chance because I have improved a lot since the last time he beat me," said Payla, who lost the first round, 3-4, but took the next three on scores of 10-6, 7-3 and 11-2.

"Because he was taller, I waited for him to attack so I could counter with both fists."

Payla swarmed all over Somjit with both fists in the second round and made the Thai eat his words.

Somjit had said before the fight that Payla—whom he had beaten all three times they had met since 2002—"would be a piece of banana" when they meet in the finals.

"I want to dedicate this victory to the Filipino people," Payla said in Filipino. "I prepared really hard for this fight. I never went out of the Athletes Village except to eat."

Payla said that his strategy was not to take the Thai champion on but wait for him to attack and then pick off points on the counter-attack.

"If I had engaged him in a fistfight I know that I would have lost," he said.

Somjit said he had trouble after injuring his left bicep during the fight.

"It was painful and I couldn't punch," he said. "But all credit to Payla. He has improved."

Another boxer, bantamweight Joan Tipon, seeks a second gold for the highly regarded squad when he tackles South Korean Han Soon-chul today.

A first time

Oddly, though, the result of billiards' 9-ball finals was anti-climactic for the Philippine delegation. The outcome was less important than the fact the winner was a Filipino.

Gabica's gold and 8-ball silver, as well as De Luna's 9-ball silver, topped the single-medal harvest of the billiards squad in the 2002 Busan Asiad.

It was also the first time a Filipino had won a singles title in the sport. Francisco "Django" Bustamante and Antonio Lining triumphed in that Games' 9-ball doubles, an event the Doha organizers scratched here.

Significantly, Gabica's victory underscored the Philippines' dominance in pool's most popular event.

Bustamante and Efren "Bata" Reyes took the inaugural Doubles World Cup in Wales in July, and Ronnie Alcano put away the World Pool championship in Manila last month.

In between, Reyes captured billiards' richest prize of $500,000 with his victory in the International Pool Tour in Las Vegas.

"This gold medal is for the Filipino people," said Gabica, whose incredible five golden breaks carried him through a handsome quarterfinal win over China's Xu Meng and into the medal round.

"It's okay, that happens," De Luna said in Filipino after the two-hour match. "I felt that I was sliding behind and I would have ultimately lost the game. What's important is that we won the gold and the silver."

Long wait over

Former world champion Yang Ching-shun clinched the bronze over unheralded South Korean Jeoung Young-hwa, 11-7. Yang, the Asiad winner in 1998 and 2002, lost 11-7, to De Luna in the semis.

Mamiit extended South Korean top seed Lee Hyung-taik in the first set before bowing, 5-7, 0-6, in the singles semifinals. He and partner Eric Taino also settled for the doubles bronze after bowing to the popular and top-ranked Indian pair of Leander Paes and Mahesh Bhupati, 2-6, 4-6.

Filipinos last made it to the sport's medal table in the 1966 Asian Games in Bangkok, where Jess Hernandez bagged the singles bronze, RP pairs took the silver in both men's and women's doubles, and both the men's and women's squads won the team bronze.

"That was a long, long wait—Mamiit deserves praise for his patriotism," said Ajay Pathak, vice president for international affairs of the Philippine Tennis Association and competition chief for tennis of the Doha Games.

10-man logjam

"He gladly wore the RP uniform in the Southeast Asian Games and the Asian Games so he could win medals for us."

The 30-year-old Mamiit was born in Los Angeles, California, to parents who were originally from Sariaya, Quezon, and Batangas.

Juan Ramon Lanza guided Don't Cry for Me to a perfect zero-penalty performance and was part of a big 10-man logjam at the top of the standings in equestrian's individual jumping Round A.

The group included two Japanese, two Malaysians, two South Koreans and the Qatari favorite Ali Yousuf Ahmad Al Rumaihi.

The 32-year-old from Alabang, Muntinlupa, showed up teammate Danielle Cojuangco, 21, who was in 13th spot with 5 penalty points.

Archers Mark Javier and Marvin Cordero failed to progress from the quarterfinals of the men's individual round.

Javier downed Kazakhstan's Segey Jhristich, 99-95, in the round of 16 and then yielded to South Korea's Im Dong-hyun, 104-113, while Cordero beat Uzbekistan's Amet Umerov, 96-72, before bowing to Chinese Taipei's Kuo Cheng-wei, 97-106.

The RP squad in the men's team foil outhustled Iraq, 45-40, in the round of 16 but went down in defeat to Japan in the quarterfinals.

The sepak takraw pair of Deseree Autor and Irene Apdon proved no match to China's Sun Xiaodan and Wang Xiaohua, 10-21, 6-21, and were eliminated from the the women's doubles preliminaries.

After missing the bronze with a fourth-place finish in the men's synchronized 10m platform event, Niño Carog and Zardo Domenios scored 329.20 points and 313.0, respectively, and qualified for the 12-man finals in diving's 1m springboard event topped by Chinese world champions Luo Yutong (443.70) and Qin Kai (413). *With a report from AFP*

VILITO PAYLA unleashes a strong right that finds its mark and rocks the head of former world champion Somjit Jongjohor in their flyweight gold medal bout. Payla won the gold medal. LYN RILLON

Gabica finally . . .

From page A24

hill, 10-4, in the winner's break format.

Crowd support

And when De Luna again extended the duel by getting the better of nifty safeties to move in to 7-10, Gabica knew he only had to avoid a mistake to put the match away.

De Luna blinked and fouled on the 6 ball.

"I will celebrate this luck with my wife (Marijean) and children (Ma. Antonella and Antonio Jr.) when I get back home," said Gabica, who pulled off an unheard-of five golden breaks in beating China's Xu Meng in the quarterfinals and landing in the medal round.

De Luna also distinguished himself despite the defeat. He ended the third straight Asiad title bid of Chinese Taipei's Yang Ching-shun in the semifinals, 11-7.

Gabica said the support of the predominantly Filipino crowd steeled his nerves going into the finals.

Heartbreaker for Iris

"We really felt their support and that helped us in crucial times," he said. "When our opponents won racks, they'd all be very quiet, and when we won, they would all cheer."

Earlier, Iris Ranola suffered a heartbreaking 7-6 loss to Pan Xiaoting of China in their playoff for the bronze in the women's 9-ball singles.

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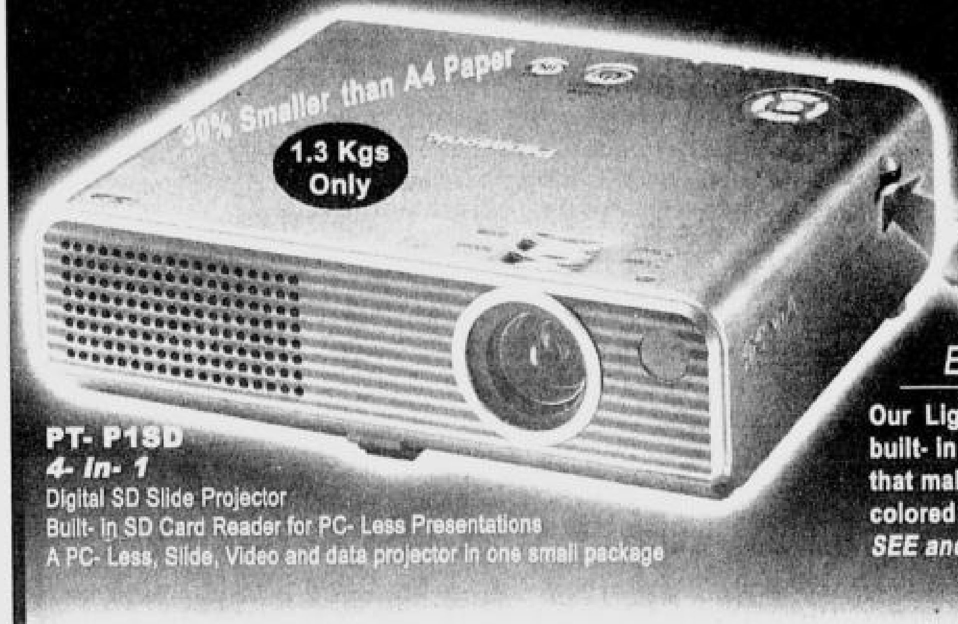

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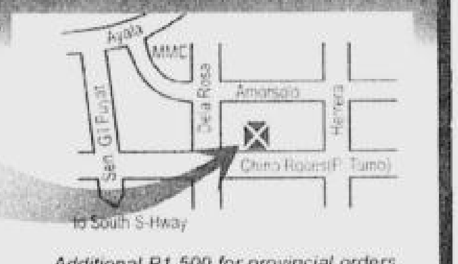

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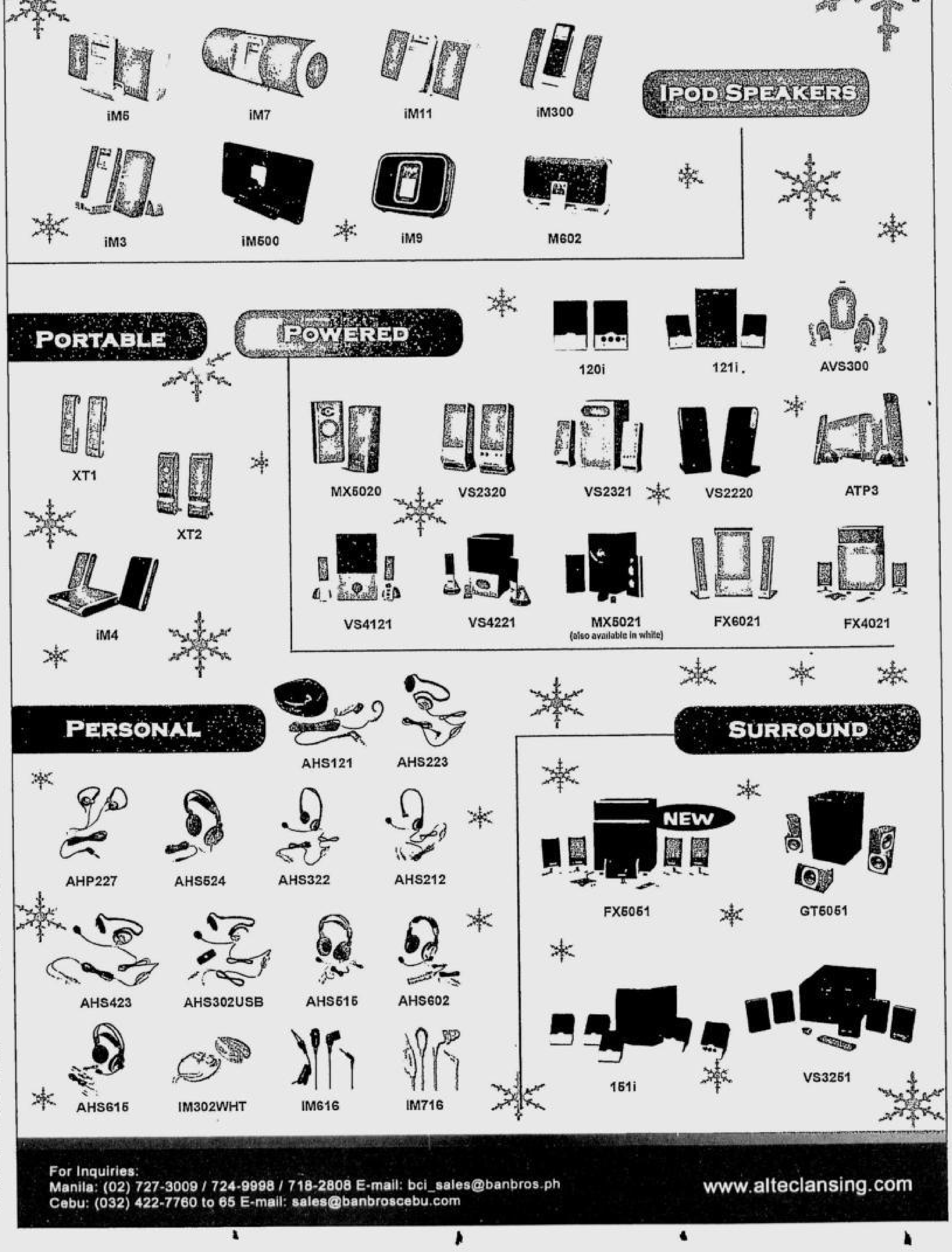

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Gabica finally bags gold

By Ted S. Melendres
Sports Editor

DOHA, QATAR—DESPITE LOSING the gold in the 8-ball finals, Antonio Gabica didn't have to think much about winning or losing the 9-ball championship.

The 34-year-old Cebuano felt no pressure at all in what would be his hour of redemption—all because he was contesting the 9-ball gold medal with a teammate, Jeffrey de Luna.

No matter who won, the Philippines would have the gold—its first in the 15th Asian Games—plus a silver.

Riding his luck and keeping his focus throughout the match, Gabica downed the 24-year-old De Luna, 11-7, in the final event of the cue sport here and pocketed what arguably is his biggest title on the international stage.

Gabica closed the match as he opened it—with a stroke of luck—when De Luna's fightback abruptly ended on a foul shot in the 18th rack.

De Luna had also fouled to hand Gabica the first rack.

Late Sports
More Asian Games and sports stories on A33 to 40

"What a way to win," said Gabica who the night before gave away a 7-4 lead and lost the 8-ball gold to Japan's Satoshi Kawabata.

"There was no pressure at all because Jeff is a good friend and teammate. We even wished each other well before the game."

When Gabica pocketed the 9 ball, the crowd erupted into cheers and swarmed around the two protagonists, as a group of Filipino Games volunteers in orange track suits chanted the victor's name.

"We are all very happy in the team because we worked hard for this victory," Gabica said in Filipino. "Of course, between Jeff and I, we still competed for the gold. When I lost to the Japanese in 8-ball, we said that one of us should get the (9-ball) gold."

With the win, Gabica assured himself of a cash windfall of P2.3 million. (*See related story on A34*)

The spoils

Under Republic Act No. 9064, or the Sports Incentive Act, Gabica is entitled to P1 million for his 9-ball win and P500,000 for his silver in the 8-ball.

He will receive an additional P800,000 with the approval by President Macapagal-Arroyo recently of extra cash incentives of P500,000, P300,000 and P200,000 for the gold, silver, and bronze medalists of this year's Asiad.

The tide of battle turned irrevocably in Gabica's favor in the 12th rack when De Luna, surging back from 2-7 to 4-7, wilted after a series of impressive safety plays for the black ball.

That was all Gabica needed to get to the

GABICA/ A23

To: ~~Rico~~ ~~Kat~~ ~~Carla~~
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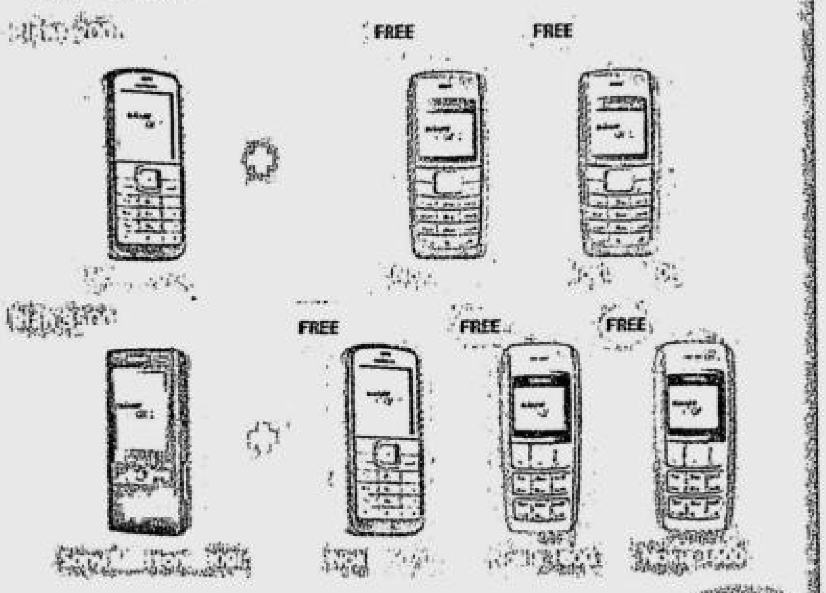

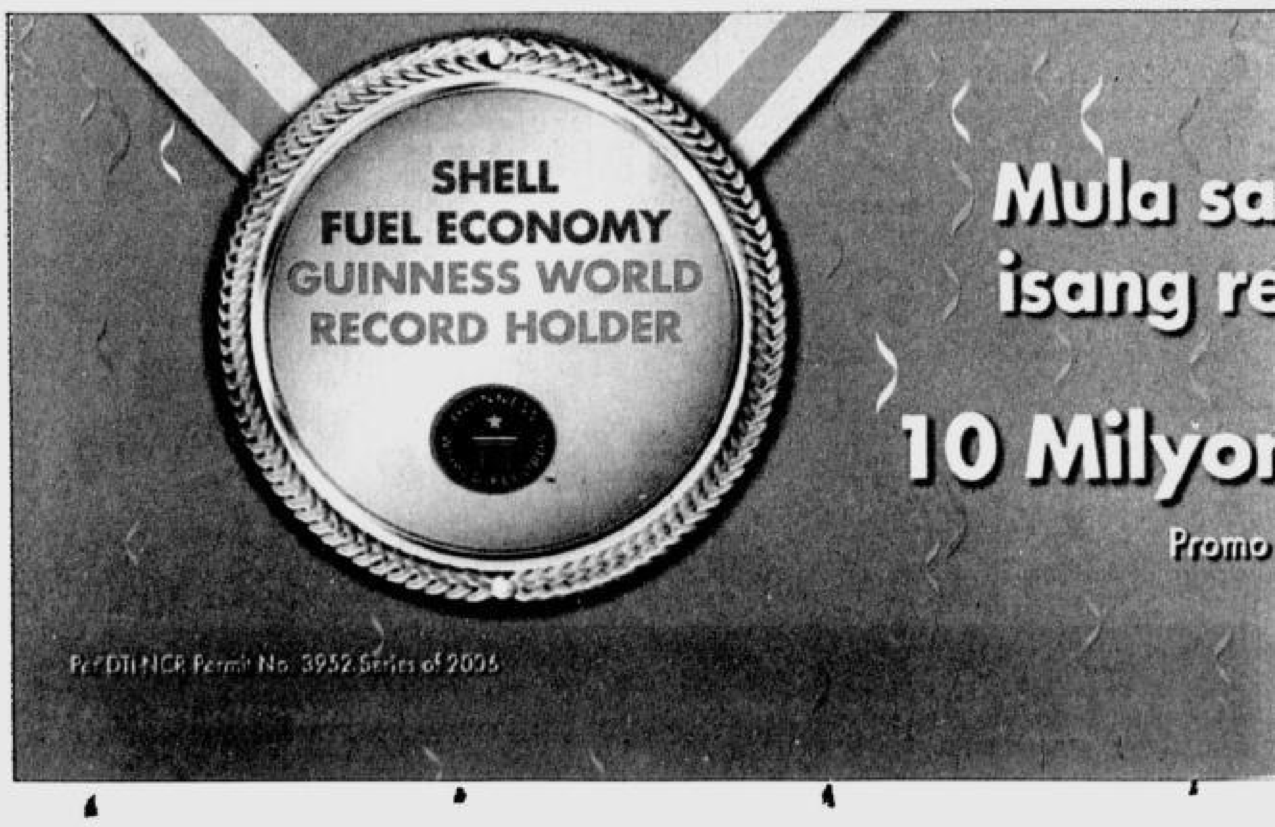

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Matatag na haligi ng inyong kinabukasan

Suspected gambling den raided by NBI

71 high-tech slot machines found in Quezon City game center

By Margaux C. Ortiz

AGENTS OF THE NATIONAL BUREAU OF INvestigation (NBI) raided an alleged gambling den disguised as an amusement center in Quezon City and seized 71 expensive slot machines from the establishment on Monday.

NBI Special Investigation Service (SIS) Deputy Director Victor Bessat said the raid on the Dolphin Story Game Center allegedly owned and operated by a group of Koreans, was conducted upon the request of the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (Pagcor).

Pagcor officials had certified that the establishment was not licensed or authorized to operate as a gaming entity, according to an NBI report.

Before the raid, operatives of the NBI Anti-Fraud and Computer Crimes Division (AFC-CD) headed by Regional Director Elfren Meneses Jr., using a hidden camera, took video footages of the illegal operations inside the alleged gambling den.

After applying for a search warrant, agents raided the establishment at 114 Tomas Morato Avenue and confiscated the high-tech slot machines, which they estimated to be worth over P21 million.

Special investigator Roel Jovenir of the NBI AFCCD said the slot machines were so "advanced" that the Pagcor's own machines paled in comparison.

"There is a big possibility that the machines have been smuggled into the country," Jovenir said.

While the alleged owner, a certain Mr. Chung or Hung, was absent during the raid, the NBI agents invited for questioning four Koreans allegedly involved in the establishment's operations.

Son Chon-choi, Dong Hi-lee, Due Hee-yun, and Sung Hwa-cho were brought to the NBI with eight Filipino employees of the game center and Korex Pawnshop, which the Korean operator likewise owned.

Apart from the slot machines, the NBI agents also seized 54 office chairs and several appliances allegedly given away as prizes to gamers.

According to Jovenir, customers who wanted to play in the establishment had to purchase a ticket worth P500 which automatically entitled them to 10,000 points.

After collecting enough points while playing on the slot machines, the customers would be given prizes like gift certificates allowing them to claim certain appliances like DVD players, air-conditioning units and even motorcycles.

However, the players could also exchange the gift certificates for cash at the Korex pawnshop.

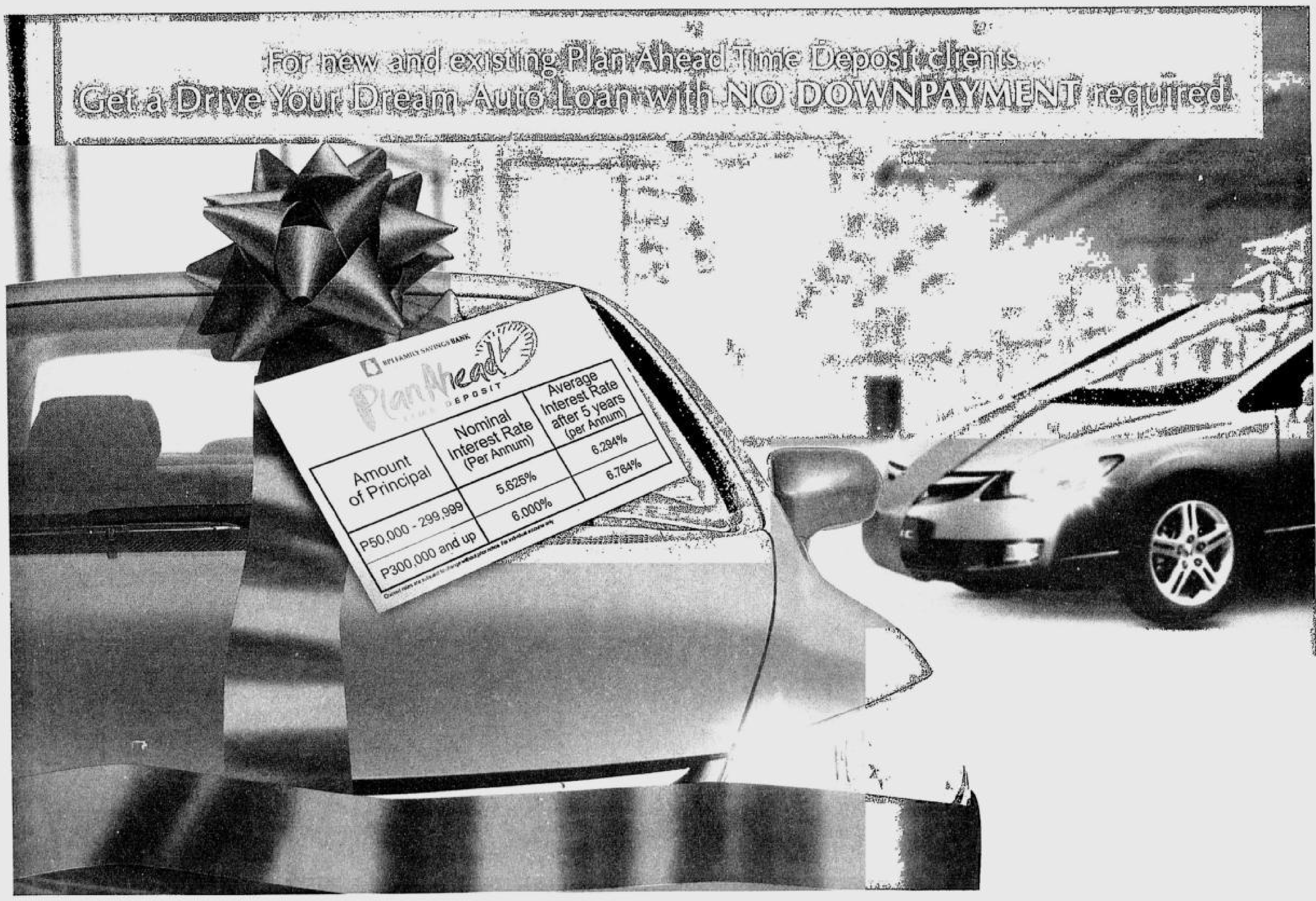
"Most of the customers would of course opt for cash," Jovenir said, adding that the appliances were "mere display items."

"The use of cash qualified the activity as a gambling operation," said the NBI agent.

YOUNG CAROLERS

Students of De La Salle Santiago Zobel delight guests at a hotel in Makati City by serenading them with Christmas carols.

RAFFY LERMA



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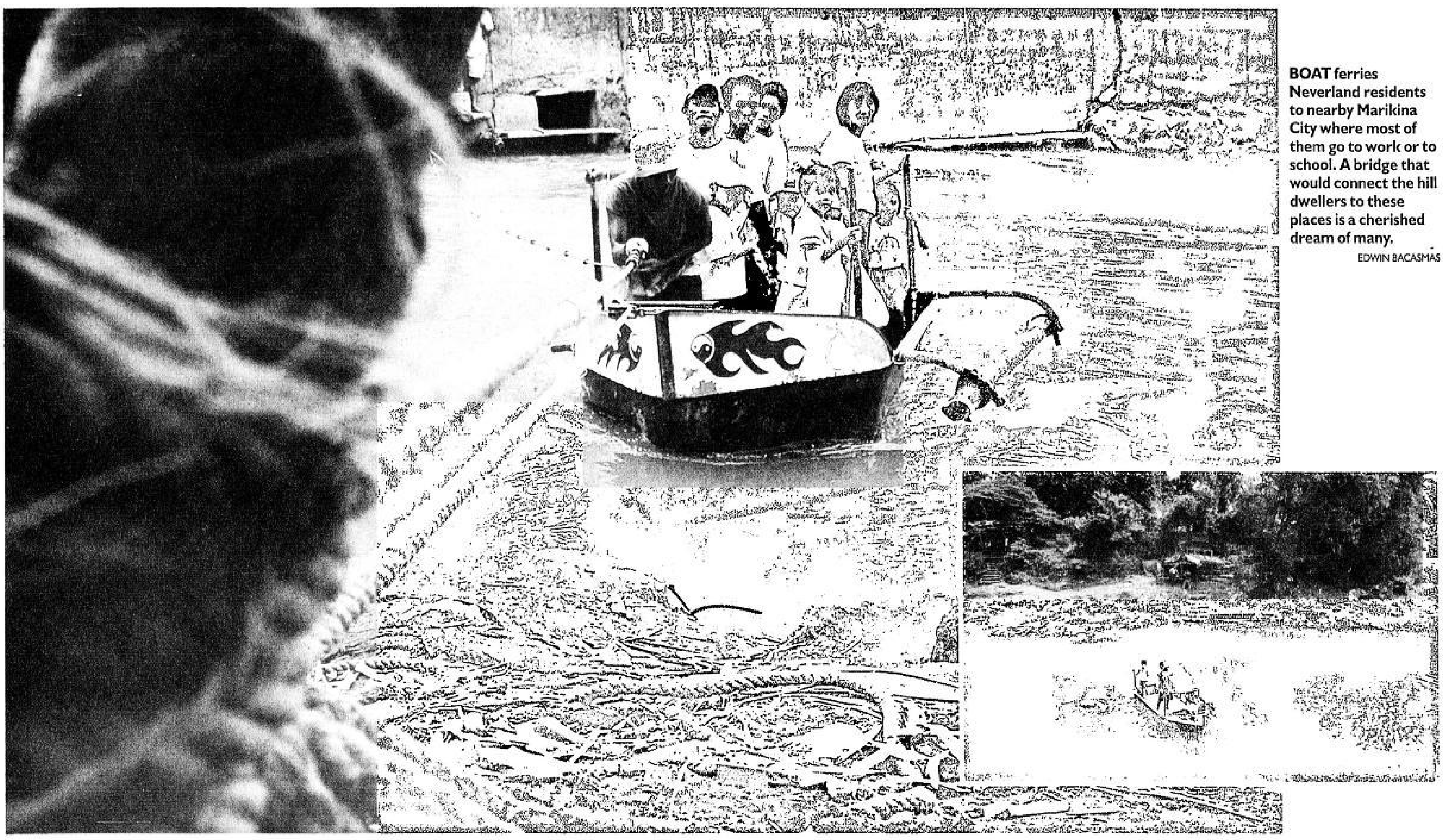


BOAT ferries Neverland residents to nearby Marikina City where most of them go to work or to school. A bridge that would connect the hill dwellers to these places is a cherished dream of many.

EDWIN BACASMAS

Finding Neverland (and hope) in San Mateo

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

TAKING INSPIRATION FROM THE STORY OF fairy tale character, "Peter Pan," residents of a hill in San Mateo, Rizal have named their village "Neverland."

But the place is far from the dreamland where according to the storybook, Pan and his gang, the Lost Boys, live.

Separated from Marikina City by the Nangka River, the five-hectare village has no electricity and water connections.

On top of this, the more than a thousand families that live there are caught in a legal-tug-of-war for ownership of the lots where their shanties stand.

The location of Neverland is also far from ideal. Residents have to ride on small boats every day to go to school, report for work, or to go to the market.

Five months ago, help came to Neverland when a religious organization visited the site.

Sympathetic ear

The Good News Community Fellowship—a religious group in search of urban poor communities to adopt—heard about the plight of children living in the area during one of their medical missions in neighboring Barangay Nangka in Marikina City.

"Many children in Neverland no longer went to school, while those who still attended were having a hard time crossing the river especially during heavy rains," missionary Ronnie Rico told the INQUIRER.

Supported by the global missionary group International Teams, the fellowship decided to adopt the village, seeing the possibility of starting a ministry there.

Its first project was to encourage children in Neverland to attend classes in a preschool it was operating—free of charge. But only 25 enrolled this school year, according to Pastor Jemuel Castillo.

Too far away

"Some of the children here find it difficult to go to our school because it is far from their homes," Castillo told the INQUIRER during a visit to Neverland. Two boats alternately operate in the village ferrying residents to the other side of the Nangka River.

Neverland, also known as Banaba Extension, is connected to Barangay Banaba in San Mateo. Residents can also leave the village by passing through the barangay, but the travel time is longer so most prefer crossing the river.

But problems arise when the river swells or if residents transport items too heavy for the boat.

'Flying box'

In cases like this, villagers say they use the "flying box"—a steel bar on a rope equipped with a pulley. The rope is suspended on two poles standing on opposite sides of the river.

Children, however, see the flying box not just as a means of crossing the river. Holding onto the steel hanger, they "fly" like Peter Pan, sliding with marvelous ease from one side of the river to the other. At times, they let go in the middle of the ride, falling into the water for a swim.

Some of the earliest settlers in the community say the hill used to be full of trees and lush vegetation.

At that time, a television show on Peter Pan was immensely popular, prompting children to name their hill after Pan's home.

Crystal-clear water

The view also used to be picturesque and the river had crystal clear waters, according to oldtimers. Teresita Adriano recalled that she tried planting vegetables at the foot of the then verdant hill. "We would even catch fish then. Once, when a movie was filmed here, the actors even washed their faces with water from the river," said Adriano, now 66.

The beauty of the once uninhabited hill is now only a distant memory, she added.

Right after she and a few neighbors decided to build huts in the area, people arrived in droves to clear the land. Soon, Neverland became a crowded community.

"Now it is very ugly," sighed Adriano, who lives in a makeshift tent facing the already murky river.

The lush vegetation has been replaced by wooden shanties that can be reached through muddy and narrow alleys that look like a confusing maze.

Double fare

Adriano is now the owner of one of two small boats taking turns in transporting residents to their destinations for P1 per ride. When the river swells, the fare is doubled, she added.

She said her boat ferries hundreds of passengers a day, mostly students going to public schools, and residents who had come from the provinces in search of a better life and who now work in factories in the city.

This time, residents have found other people who could help them or their children, pursue their dreams.

Preschool teachers from the Good News Community Fellowship now come to the village every Sunday.

The basic literacy program was launched only last October, after the weekly Bible studies held in the village.

"During our Bible studies, we noticed that there were many children who were not enrolled in preschool. So we decided to organize a weekly literacy program for them as well," Castillo said.

Sunday classes

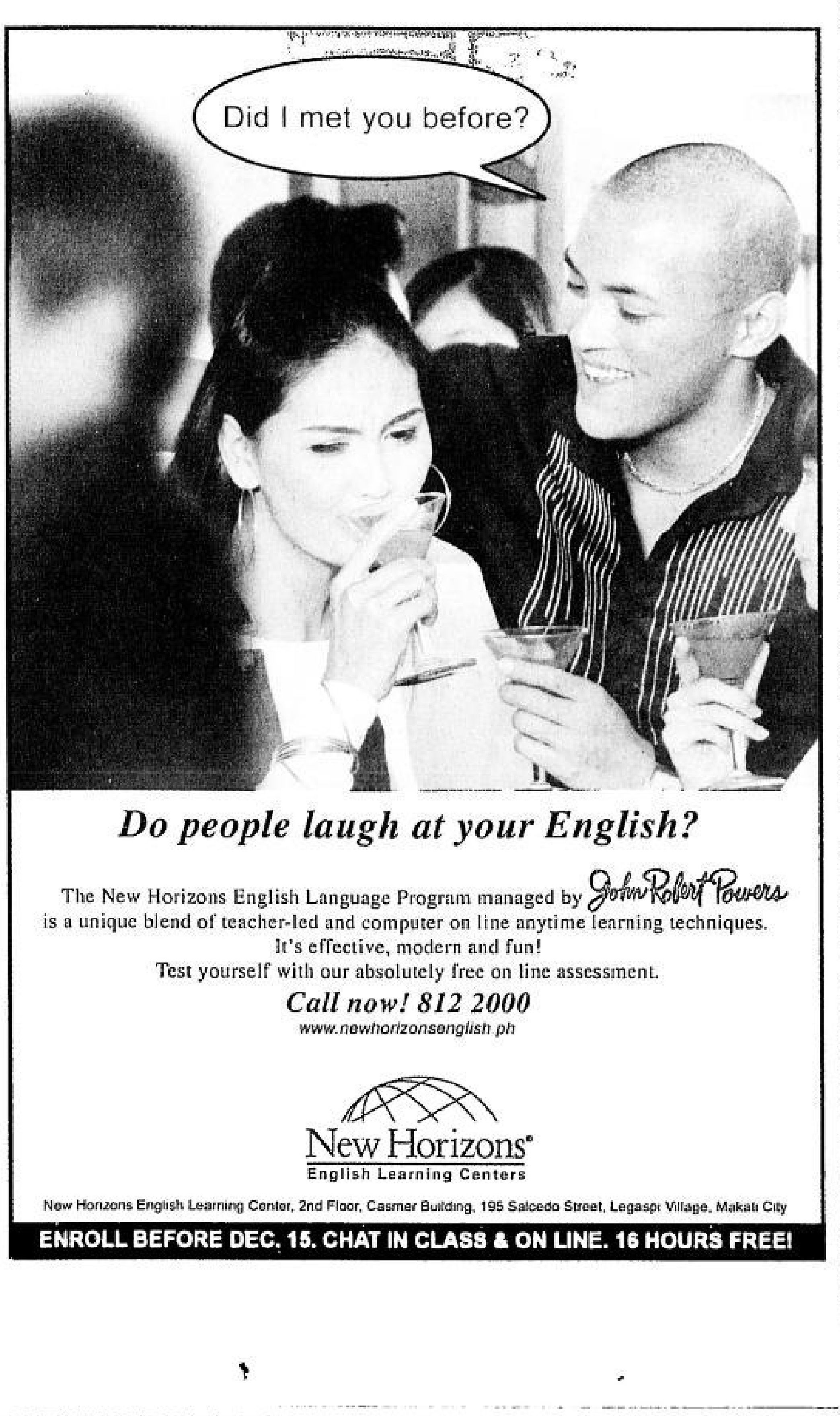
Two teachers from another volunteer group working with the fellowship visit the village every Sunday afternoon, teaching children to read and write, Rico added.

The fellowship rents a two-story house in the heart of the village where they hold the sessions.

There are also plans to hold a survey in the area soon to determine the villagers' other needs, as well as to find out the exact number of residents, Rico said.

In the meantime, his dream for the village is a simple one—build a small bridge to connect Neverland to the mainland so pupils will no longer have to brave the river's strong currents during stormy weather.

Or use the pulley to fly like Peter Pan.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New charges filed against former NBI agent, 4 others for car theft

By Margaux C. Ortiz

A FORMER INTELLIGENCE OFFICER of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) who is already facing multiple criminal charges has been accused of yet another offense.

Martin Soriano, 39, of 64 South Maya, Phil-Am Life Homes, Quezon City, was charged with car theft yesterday in the Department of Justice.

Also charged were Soriano's girlfriend Maria Irlanda, his personal secretary Helen Gratil and drivers Emiliano Capili and Michael Gatchalian.

The new charges were filed after Soriano and his companions were arrested on Monday afternoon in front of a restaurant in Makati City as they were about to board a car that had been reported stolen.

Prior to the incident, Soriano had been detained at the Quezon City Jail for multiple charges, including kidnapping, illegal arrest, extortion, and robbery, according to NBI National Capital Region (NCR) Office executive officer Rommel Vallejo.

An investigation conducted by the NBI NCR, headed by Regional Director Ruel Lasala, showed that Johnny Catayong, a businessman and resident of San Isidro, Makati City, was driving on Gil Puyat Avenue on Monday when he saw his Mitsubishi Lancer, which he had lost to car thieves two months ago, pass by.

Catayong followed the stolen car, which was being tailed by a white Toyota RAV4, to a restaurant on Makati Avenue. At the same time, he called the NBI for assistance.

Vallejo, who led the agents during the operation, said they were surprised when they saw Soriano come out of the restaurant with his companions.

"Soriano was supposed to be detained at the Quezon City Jail because of the many charges filed against him," Vallejo said, adding that the former NBI agent was not wearing handcuffs and his detainee's uniform when he was accosted.

A check showed that the Toyota RAV4 also had spurious registration papers.

Soriano and his companions were later brought to the Makati City Police Station, Vallejo said.

The NBI, meanwhile, took into custody the three jail guards who were escorting Soriano. Earlier, they had taken him to his hearing at the Makati City Metropolitan Trial Court .

"The guards, who also rode the vehicles with the suspects, told us that they did not know that Soriano's cars were stolen," Vallejo said.

Soriano had allegedly offered the car and the RAV4 when he learned that the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology did not have enough vehicles to transport detainees from the Quezon City Jail to the courts where their cases were being heard.

However, SJO3 Enrique Guevarra, SJO3 Edgardo Naguimbing and SJO3 Eduardo Tayag could face administrative charges before the BJMP, according to the NBI official.

Soriano, who was dismissed from the NBI in April 1999, was arrested in January 2005 for allegedly abducting Caroline Guillen in Makati City.

He was also accused by police "asset" Mary "Rosebud" Ong of kidnapping her and her mother.

Former actress Aurora Sevilla also surfaced at the NBI last year to file complaints against Soriano who allegedly took her car and her son's condominium unit, including all its furnishings, in 1999.

DID YOU KNOW

THE FIRST movie shown in the Philippines was the French film "Un Homme Au Chapeau" ("Man with a Hat") which was featured on Jan. 1, 1897 at the Salon de Pertierra in Escolta, Manila. Its owner, a certain Pertierra, was a Spaniard who established the phonograph parlor on the ground floor of Casino Español in 1896. He used a 60-millimeter Gaumont chrono-photograph projector to show the film.

Cyril L. Bonabente,
Inquirer Research

7 escape from Caloocan jail; 2 back in cell

By Nancy C. Carvajal

WITH NO GUARDS AROUND to stop them, seven detainees escaped from their cell in a police sub-station in Caloocan City before dawn yesterday.

However, one of them was rearrested a few hours after the jail break, while another surrendered.

Yesterday's incident was the second prison break recorded in Caloocan in the last three months.

Last September, five inmates escaped from another detention cell in the city at the height of a heavy downpour.

Supt. Geronimo Reside, Caloocan police chief, said the seven prisoners who escaped yesterday from the police sub-station 1 headquarters on Malolos Avenue corner G. de Jesus Street, Bagong Barrio, were all facing robbery charges.

They were able to get out of their cell by sawing off one of the iron bars at around 2 a.m.

"No police guards were around to stop them when they escaped," Reside said.

In trouble

He added that he has ordered the relief of the station commander, Chief Insp. Bienvenido Z. Santianes, following the incident.

Another policeman who was supposed to be on duty at the time the prisoners escaped failed to report for work.

Reside told the INQUIRER that he has ordered his men to take into custody SPO1 Ermin Hipolito so that he could undergo questioning on why he left the inmates unguarded.

He added that SP03 Ernesto Mangahas, the shift duty officer, would also be investigated.

Reside identified the prisoners who are still at large as Arturo de Lima, Roland Robles, Jason Jabaan, Gilbert Mariano and a minor.

Another escapee, also a minor, was turned over by his parents to the police several hours after the escape.

He claimed that the other prisoners had threatened to kill them if he did not escape along with them.

The seventh prisoner, Roderick Ancancelado, was rearrested at his brother's house in Libis, Caloocan City, not far from City Hall.

Temporary

Reside explained that the seven prisoners were temporarily being held at the police station in line with a memorandum issued by the Department of Justice early this year.

The DOJ memorandum states that no suspect can be jailed in a city jail without a commitment order issued by a court.

"We had to detain all arrested suspects in our police stations while waiting for a court order," Reside said.

Ideally, the suspect should not stay for more than a day in the detention cell inside a police station.

"But sometimes, because of the delay in the issuance of court orders, we have no choice but to hold them there for several days," Reside said.

LIGHT A CANDLE The Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting ceremony, held the second Sunday of December at 7p.m. for one hour all around the world, honors children of all ages. The Philippine version was held on December 10, Human Rights Day, at the University of the Philippines Sunken Garden in Diliman, Quezon City. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

2 ABS-CBN guards die in motorcyle accident

By DJ Yap

TWO WATCHMEN OF TELEVISION network giant ABS-CBN were killed while another was injured after their motorcycle rammed into a concrete barrier on Commonwealth Avenue in Quezon City before dawn Tuesday.

Investigators identified the fatalities as George Mallorca, 26, and Giebert Sardoma, 27, while the injured victim was identified as Renzi Gargarita.

Based on an initial investigation, the three were on their way to work on board a Honda motorcycle when the incident happened at around 3 a.m.

Traffic enforcers said the three were traveling along Commonwealth Avenue, toward the direction of Philcoa, when their motorcycle crashed into a concrete barrier near a U-turn slot fronting St. Peter Parish.

The driver probably failed to see the barrier due to poor lighting in the area, police added.

Mallorca and Sardoma died before receiving medical treatment, while Gargarita survived and remains confined in the hospital, Ormita said.

Investigators said they were still trying to confirm who was driving the motorcycle at the time of the accident.

METROBRIEFS

Robbed, then killed

POLICE are investigating the death of a man whose body was found on a street in Mandaluyong City yesterday morning. The victim, whom police believe was a taxi driver based on his working clothes, had been stabbed several times. Police said the man did not have any personal belongings with him—not even a wallet or an identification card—leading them to believe he had been held up. Taxi driver Pelayo Torres was on Magalona Street in Barangay Daang Bakal when he saw the victim's body on the sidewalk about 5 a.m. yesterday.

Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

Self-defense?

USING a *sumpak* (improvised shotgun) which he made himself, a 27-year-old welder shot dead a drinking buddy on Monday night, an act which he claimed was made in self-defense. Jonathan Rebonalo surrendered to barangay officials shortly after shooting his neighbor, identified only as Palawan, at around 9 p.m. Monday. In an interview, Rebonalo said he had no choice but to defend himself when Palawan suddenly attacked him as they began to drink in one of the narrow alleys inside the crowded Laperal Compound in Barangay Guadalupe Viejo. "He tried to strangle me and pushed me. That's why I ran to my house and got my gun," a handcuffed Rebonalo said in Filipino. Police however doubted Rebonalo's claim, saying the shooting may have been due to a dispute in illegal drug deals, prevalent in the shanty community, according to Makati police chief, Supt. Gilbert Cruz.

Tarra V. Quismundo

Ham for Christmas

SOME 8,000 poor families in Navotas will be eating ham this Christmas. Mayor Toby Tiangco recently announced that he would be distributing P1 million worth of ham to indigents in the town. "With the gift, all families could participate in the celebration of the holiday season," Tiangco said. The ham would be distributed at least four days before Christmas Eve, he added. To avoid confusion, the recipients, who would be certified by the Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office, would be issued claim tickets.

Nancy C. Carvajal

Fernandez book launch on Dec. 18

TEN: Coming Home and Nine More Short Stories, a book written by University of the Philippines College of Arts and Letters Prof. Albina Peczon Fernandez, will be launched at the Main Library in UP Diliman at 2 p.m. on Monday, Dec. 18. Sponsors of the event are the UP Diliman Main Library, Center for Women's Studies and the College of Arts and Letters' Departamento ng Filipino at Panitikan ng Filipinas in cooperation with the Holy Angel University's Juan D. Nepomuceno Center for Kapampangan Studies.

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Arctic ice may melt by 2040 says study

SAN FRANCISCO—GLOBAL warming could melt the Arctic's ice during the summer as early as 2040, raising serious environmental as well as commercial and strategic issues, experts said on Monday.

"The effects of greenhouse warming are starting to rear their ugly head," said Mark Serreze, a scientist at the National Snow and Ice Data Center at the University of Colorado in Boulder.

Marika Holland, a scientist at the National Center for Atmospheric Research, projects a slow, steady decline of Arctic ice as global warming continues, with a dramatic "tipping point" in about two decades.

The research, to be published by the scientific journal Geophysical Research Letters on Tuesday, found that the extent of sea ice each September could be reduced so abruptly that, within about 20 years, it may begin retreating four times faster than at any time in the observed record.

"The ice is actually quite stable until 2025 and then boom, it goes," Holland told the fall meeting of the American Geophysical Union in San Francisco.

That means that the famous white spot at the top of the globe could be ice-free in summer as early as 2040, according to modeling done on supercomputers.

In one simulation, the September ice shrinks from about 6 million square km to 2 million square km in a 10-year period. By 2040, only a small amount of perennial sea ice would remain along the north coasts of Greenland and Canada, while most of the Arctic basin would be ice-free in September.

Although geographically remote from most of the inhabited world, melting Arctic ice could change the world's ecosystem including sea and surface life, weather, shipping patterns and even national defense needs.

"There are winners and losers in this game but on balance I think it's negative," Serreze said.

For Russia, "the shipping routes are going to open, they will see economic benefit from that," he continued. "For Canada, this could be an economic boom." Massive Arctic melting could create a host of problems as well, from how wildlife and fish adapt to how nations respond to the new frontiers.

"It will have all these other geostrategic issues," Mead Treadwell, chair of the US Arctic Research Commission in Anchorage, Alaska, said in an interview.

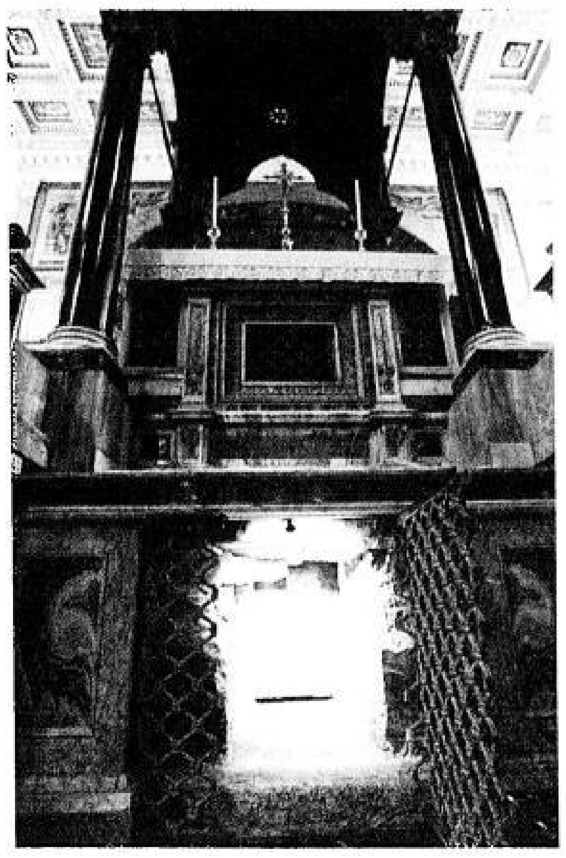
He said, for example, that the United States might have to patrol its northern Alaskan border, and prepare for remote oil spills as new shipping routes open.

A US Geological Survey last month found that polar bear cubs in Alaska's Beaufort Sea are much less likely to survive compared to about 20 years ago because of the melting sea ice.

Further afield, the lack of cooling weather from the Arctic ice could change weather patterns elsewhere, for example, curtailing skiing opportunities in Colorado, or changing planting seasons, Colorado resident Serreze said.

Scientists say limiting human greenhouse gas emissions could slow the rate of Arctic ice melting.

Reuters



ST. PAUL'S TOMB. The sarcophagus believed to contain the remains of the Apostle Paul is seen under the main altar of the Basilica of St. Paul outside-the-Walls, in Rome, Monday, Dec. 11. Vatican archaeologists have unearthed the sarcophagus, which dates back to at least A.D. 39. It has been the subject of an extended excavation that began in 2002 and was completed last month. AP

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Scientists find young plesiosaur in Antarctica

BUENOS AIRES—SCIENTISTS FROM THE United States and Argentina have recovered the fossil skeleton of a young plesiosaur—a marine reptile that lived some 70 million years ago—in Antarctica, institutes from both countries said on Monday.

"The fossil remains represent one of the most-complete plesiosaur skeletons ever found and is thought to be the best-articulated fossil skeleton ever recovered from Antarctica," the US National Science Foundation said.

Long-necked plesiosaurs swam in the oceans in the southern ocean when the Earth was far warmer than it is today, the Foundation said in a joint statement with the Argentine Antarctic Institute, which co-funded the exhibition.

The skeleton is about 1.5 meters long, one sixth the size of an adult, and its stomach area was very well-preserved.

"The researchers speculate volcanism similar to the massive eruption of Mt. St. Helens in Washington in 1980, may have caused the animal's death," the statement said.

Scientists believe the area where the fossil and other partial plesiosaur remains were found may have been a shallow area where marine reptiles gave birth and where young remained until they were big enough to go into open waters.

It was tough work getting the remains off of Vega Island in Antarctica due to freezing weather and 113-kph winds, the statement said.

"At the end of the work, icy temperatures turned water to slush before plaster could be mixed to encase the fossil for transportation," "The ground was so frozen, a digging tool snapped in half during the excavation. Finally, a jackhammer had to be carried up to the site in backpacks along with gasoline, plaster, and water," the statement said.

Reuters

WORLDBRIEFS

Gaza violence

KHAN YOUNIS—Hamas gunmen opened fire on demonstrators from the rival Fatah movement in the southern Gaza Strip on Tuesday, wounding four people in the first factional violence following the deaths of three children in a drive-by shooting, officials said. The demonstration was organized to protest the deaths of the children, whose car was riddled with bullets as they drove to school Monday morning. Fatah officials have accused Hamas of being behind the shooting. The children's father is an intelligence officer and Fatah loyalist who is considered an enemy of Hamas. Monday's shooting has sparked fears of a new wave of fighting between Fatah and Hamas. *AP*

Militant jailed

JAKARTA—An Indonesian court on Tuesday sentenced an Islamic militant to three years in jail for hiding 20 kilograms of explosives later used in a deadly attack on the Australian Embassy in Jakarta in 2004. Ahmad Arif Hermansyah, 27, admitted looking after two boxes for an alleged radical fugitive, but told the Surabaya District Court in East Java that he did not know their contents. Defense lawyers said they would appeal the verdict on the grounds that prosecutors failed to prove Hermansyah knew what was in the boxes. The explosives were used in the September 2004 suicide bombing which killed 11, including the bomber, and wounded 200. *AP*

Suicide attack

KANDAHAR—At least four police and two civilians were killed in a suicide attack Tuesday at the governor's house in Afghanistan's southern Helmand province, police said. The bomber sneaked into the heavily-guarded compound in Lashkargah during working hours at the governor's house, which also hosts police and government offices, provincial police spokesperson Mohammad Nabi Mullahkhil told AFP. "It was a suicide attack which left four policemen and two civilians dead as well as injuries to eight other people," the spokesperson said. "He blew himself up causing casualties and panic." *AFP*

Drug gangs

MEXICO CITY—Mexico's new government, struggling with rampant drug trafficking and crime, ordered thousands of troops to the western state of Michoacan on Monday to fight drug cartels locked in a vicious turf war. President Felipe Calderon's security cabinet said more than 5,000 soldiers and Marines were being deployed to crack down on drug gangs in the state, a key air and sea transshipment point for US-bound cocaine. *Reuters*

Annan hits US policy in farewell address

ANNAN REUTERS

WASHINGTON—RETIRING UN Secretary General Kofi Annan took a farewell jab at US foreign policy Monday, implying America had confused its friends by compromising core ideals in the "war on terror."

US officials shrugged off the comments but the speech prompted Annan's fierce critics in Congress to claim the United Nations was stewing in corruption and empowering "thuggish" regimes.

Annan chose the symbolic venue of the Independence, Missouri, library of late president Harry S. Truman, whom he lionized as a "master-builder" of the United Nations, to obliquely highlight US policies which rocked the world body.

He lauded past US leadership in fighting for human rights, but warned: "that lead can only be maintained if America remains true to its principles—including in the struggle against terrorism." "When it appears to abandon its own ideals and objectives, its friends abroad are naturally troubled and confused," said Annan, who hands over to South Korea's Foreign Minister Ban Ki-Moon on Dec. 31.

"The US has given the world an example of a democracy in which everyone, including the most powerful is subject to legal restraint." "Its current moment of world supremacy gives it a priceless opportunity to entrench the same principles at the global level." In an apparent reference to the US invasion of Iraq, Annan argued states which use military force must convince other countries such action is legitimate.

He also said that in an age of terrorism, weapons of mass destruction and threats like avian flu, no nation "can make itself secure by seeking supremacy over all others." Annan made no secret of his dismay with policies seen as unilateralist by critics of President George W. Bush's first US term, and recently angered US officials by referring to the Iraq conflict as worse than a "civil war." But in a question and answer session, Annan denied targeting the United States, and in his speech was careful not to mention Bush or his administration by name.

"Nothing could be further than the truth," Annan said. "To appeal for cooperation and leadership should never be seen as an attack." State Department spokesperson Sean McCormack played down the speech, saying he did not see the "bombast" described in some media accounts.

"There's no secretary general of the United Nations that's going to be in lockstep with the United States or any other country," he said.

Though acknowledging isolated mistakes—for example abuses of prisoners at the notorious Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq—McCormack said US policy was based on spreading liberty and democracy.

Annan has sparred for years with mainly conservative Republican critics, who claim the UN is steeped in corruption and resisting reform. Two of those foes reacted angrily to his speech.

Henry Hyde, retiring chair of the House International Relations Committee, said Annan failed to mention "rampant financial and moral mismanagement at the United Nations and the near-absence of standards of decency for the thuggish regimes that are too often empowered by its antiquated rules and procedures." Senator Norm Coleman, who assailed Annan over mismanagement of the UN Oil for Food program in Iraq, also took a shot.

"Annan's legacy will be one of missed opportunity and failed leadership at a time when the UN needed to play a critical role in the developing global community," Coleman said.

Annan tempered his remarks by stressing that when the United States was engaged in institutions like the UN, they prospered.

"None of our global institutions can accomplish much when the US remains aloof," he said, adding he prayed for "far-sighted American leadership."

AFP

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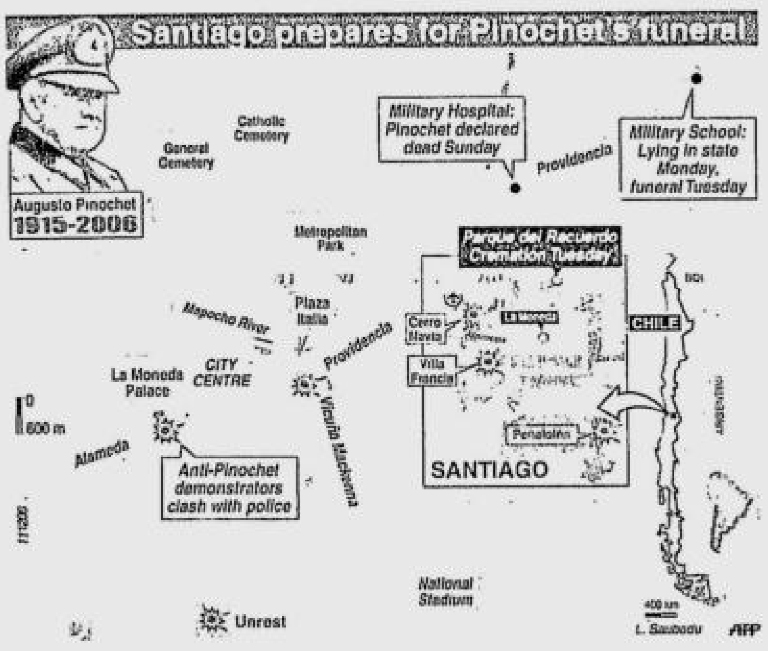

Santiago prepares for Pinochet's funeral
Augusto Pinochet 1915-2006
Catholic Cemetery
General Cemetery
Military Hospital: Pinochet declared dead Sunday
Providencia
Military School: Lying in state Monday, funeral Tuesday
Metropolitan Park
Parque del Recuerdo Cremation Tuesday
Mapocho River
Plaza Italia
CITY CENTRE
La Moneda Palace
Providencia
Vicuña Mackenna
0
600 m
Alameda
Anti-Pinochet demonstrators clash with police
Cerro Navia
Villa Francia
La Moneda
Peñalolén
SANTIAGO
CHILE
National Stadium
Unrest
400 km
L. Saubadu
AFP

Grief, joy as Chile bids farewell to Pinochet

SANTIAGO—THOUSANDS OF mourners filed past the coffin of former dictator Augusto Pinochet on Monday, praying, crying and paying their respects to a man who divides Chilean public opinion in death as he did in life.

As some 13,000 supporters flocked to a military college in Santiago where Pinochet's body lay in state in a glass-topped casket, the Chilean government defended its decision to deny him a full state funeral following his death on Sunday at age 91.

The general's son, Marco Antonio Pinochet, described that decision as "petty" and said the center-left government was "incapable of taking a noble stance at this moment in history."

Pinochet, who polarized Chile during his repressive 1973-1990 rule when more than 3,000 people were killed in political violence, died after suffering a heart attack.

News of his death prompted some Chileans to dance in the streets and others to weep, more than three decades after he swept to power in a swift and violent coup in September 1973.

Some Chileans say the general saved their country from Communism while others regard him as a murderer who escaped justice and should have been tried for human rights abuses.

Chilean President Michelle Bachelet said there would be no official mourning and the general would be given a military funeral on Tuesday. In accordance with his wishes, he will be cremated.

Bachelet, who survived abuse at one of Pinochet's most notorious detention centers, will not attend the funeral but her Defense Minister Vivianne Blanlot will.

Reuters

Rice wants North Korea denuclearized in 2 years

WASHINGTON—US SECRETARY of State Condoleezza Rice said she wanted quick results in North Korean disarmament talks that resume next week, setting a two-year time frame to dismantle Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program.

"I'm delighted the talks are going to start again, but they have to start to show results pretty soon," Rice told AFP in an exclusive interview Monday, one week before six-party negotiations resume in Beijing after a 13-month break.

Rice said Washington was ready to offer North Korea economic aid, energy assistance and improved political relations if it follows through on a September 2005 "joint statement" in which it pledged to abandon the development of nuclear weapons.

But she declined to provide details of specific incentives being put on the table by Washington ahead of the Dec. 18 resumption of talks, which will also involve China, Japan, Russia and South Korea as well as the North.

"I think that everyone is looking, in the next round or so, for the North Koreans to do something that demonstrates that they are in fact committed to denuclearization," she said.

AFP

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Former rebel leader sweeps Aceh polls

BANDA ACEH—A FORMER REBEL leader jailed by Jakarta won a surprise victory Monday in the first democratic elections for governor of Indonesia's Aceh province, according to unofficial results.

Irwandi Yusuf, a former spokesperson for the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), won 39 percent of the vote, the director of the group which conducted a sample quick count told AFP.

"I'm certain there will not be a second round because it's a win by a large amount," said Denny Januar Ali of LSI (Indonesia Survey Institute).

A second sample by election monitors Jurdil Aceh projected Yusuf to win with 38.57 percent of the vote, and an estimated turnout of 85 percent.

Yusuf said the result, if confirmed, was a dream come true for the Acehnese, who flocked to vote in elections they hope will cement the region's path to peace after three decades of war.

"This is the dream of the Acehnese people being fulfilled. They want change in all aspects of life and governance," he told reporters.

"It will be hard work for me, it is not easy to fulfil. Aceh in the future will be kind of a wild horse, because there are so many things to do. We need cooperation from all elements of Acehnese society, and most importantly with the Acehnese legislators," he said.

Yusuf said cooperation with Jakarta would be "as normal" and did not think there would be a problem with the military.

He was jailed in 2003 for rebellion, but escaped when the tsunami struck on Dec. 26, 2004 and flooded his prison.

The giant waves killed more than 168,000 people in Aceh and forced the rebels and Jakarta to reassess their priorities after decades of bloodshed.

A historic peace agreement signed last year paved the way for Monday's election for provincial governor and deputy — previously appointed by the central government — and district heads.

"We want this election to really proceed well because a peaceful settlement of the Aceh problem — an Aceh which God willing would build (its future) well and within the large family of Indonesia — has been our choice," President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono said in Jakarta.

Chief EU election observer Glyn Ford hailed the result.

"It is good for the people of Aceh. They have a clear-cut winner," the British MEP said.

But analysts said Jakarta might find the result hard to stomach.

"It's an extraordinary result. Secondly, there are going to be people challenging the result on technical grounds from other candidates, and the interesting thing is going to be what Jakarta says," Sidney Jones of the International Crisis Group think-tank told AFP.

"Will Jakarta say 'Fine, welcome, let's see how you govern', which is what I hope they will say, or will they throw up their hands in horror and say 'Look at what we've done and we'd better not do this anywhere else in the country, especially Papua'," she said. *AFP*

YUSUF REUTERS

4 more hospitalized in Russian spy case

HAMBURG—FOUR PEOPLE WHO HAD CONtact here with a business associate of the former Russian agent Alexander V. Litvinenko were hospitalized Monday, on suspicion they had been contaminated by polonium 210.

The business associate, Dmitri V. Kovtun, spent four days in Hamburg in October before flying to London, where he met with the ex-KGB agent Litvinenko on Nov. 1, the day he became ill from the radiation poisoning that killed him three weeks later.

While in Hamburg, Kovtun slept for two nights in the apartment of his former wife. The police said they detected radioactive traces on a child's car seat and in two bedrooms, suggesting that the ex-wife, Marina, her two children and her boyfriend had been contaminated.

The four people in the apartment were not showing signs of radiation sickness, according to a police spokeswoman, Ulrike Sweden, and it will take a few days of tests to determine whether they ingested the substance. She said there was no public health danger.

The police confirmed Monday that evidence of polonium was found on a seat in a BMW that met Kovtun at the Hamburg airport Oct. 28. There were also traces in a second car that he used.

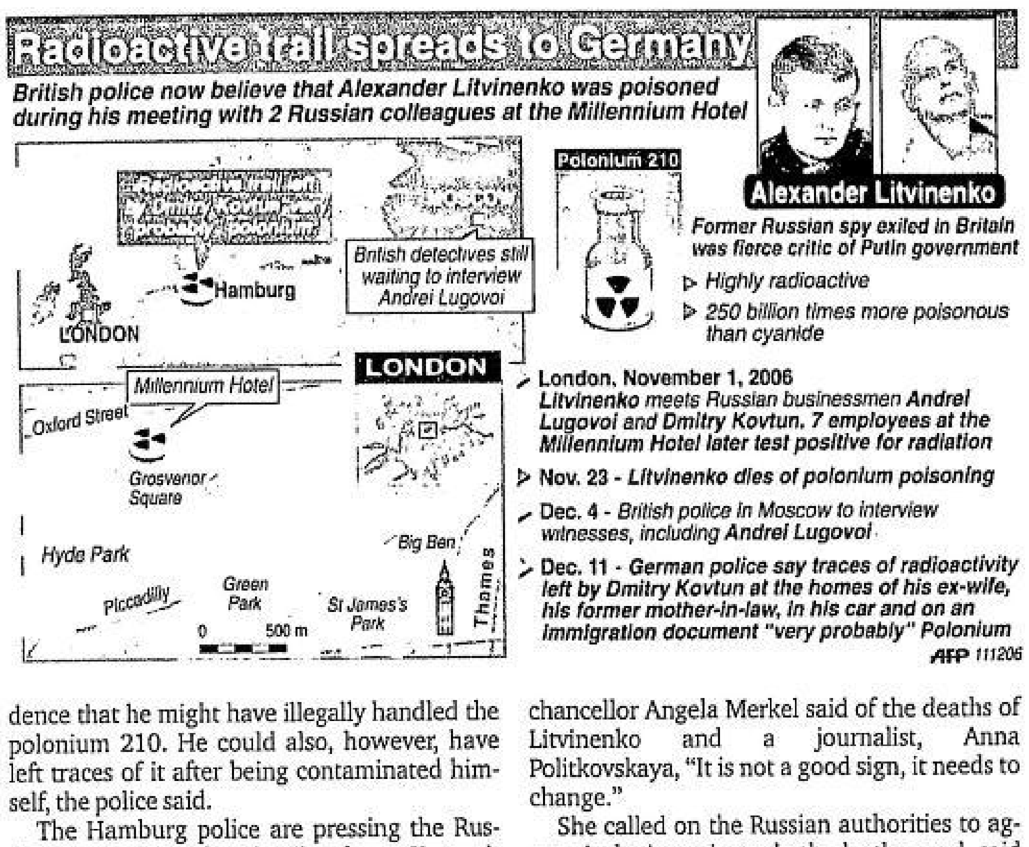
Kovtun spread a wide trail of radiation during his brief stopover in this northern German port city. His movements here have become central to solving Litvinenko's death.

German prosecutors have begun a criminal investigation of Kovtun, who is reported to be in a hospital in Moscow, saying there was evidence that he might have illegally handled the polonium 210. He could also, however, have left traces of it after being contaminated himself, the police said.

The Hamburg police are pressing the Russian authorities for details about Kovtun's health, with conflicting reports suggesting that he was in a coma, seriously ill or not outwardly ill at all.

In an interview scheduled to be broadcast on German television Monday night, German chancellor Angela Merkel said of the deaths of Litvinenko and a journalist, Anna Politkovskaya, "It is not a good sign, it needs to change."

She called on the Russian authorities to aggressively investigate both deaths, and said President Vladimir V. Putin had assured her that they would. Sweden, however, said Russian officials still had not wered questions from the Hamburg police about Kovtun. *New York Times News Service*



Radioactive trail spreads to Germany
British police now believe that Alexander Litvinenko was poisoned during his meeting with 2 Russian colleagues at the Millennium Hotel
British detectives still waiting to interview Andrei Lugovoi
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Grosvenor Square
Hyde Park
Piccadilly
Green Park
St James's Park
Big Ben
Thames
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Polonium 210
Alexander Litvinenko
Former Russian spy exiled in Britain was fierce critic of Putin government
Highly radioactive
250 billion times more poisonous than cyanide
London, November 1, 2006
Litvinenko meets Russian businessmen Andrei Lugovoi and Dmitry Kovtun. 7 employees at the Millennium Hotel later test positive for radiation
Nov. 23 - Litvinenko dies of polonium poisoning
Dec. 4 - British police in Moscow to interview witnesses, including Andrei Lugovoi
Dec. 11 - German police say traces of radioactivity left by Dmitry Kovtun at the homes of his ex-wife, his former mother-in-law, in his car and on an immigration document "very probably" Polonium
AFP 111206

Suicide bombings kill 57 workers in Baghdad

BAGHDAD—SUSPECTED INsurgents set off two bombs in a main square of central Baghdad where scores of Iraqis were waiting for jobs as day laborers on Tuesday, killing at least 57 people and wounding 151, police said.

The carefully coordinated attack in Tayaran Square at 7 a.m. involved a parked car bomb and a suicide attacker who drove up in a minibus, pretended to hire day laborers, then set off his explosive as they got into his vehicle, said police Lt. Bilal Ali.

The simultaneous explosions, which occurred about 30 meters apart, shattered windows in store fronts, left craters and blood stains in the road, and set fire to least 10 other cars.

At least 57 Iraqis, including seven policemen, were killed in the attack and 151 people wounded, Ali said.

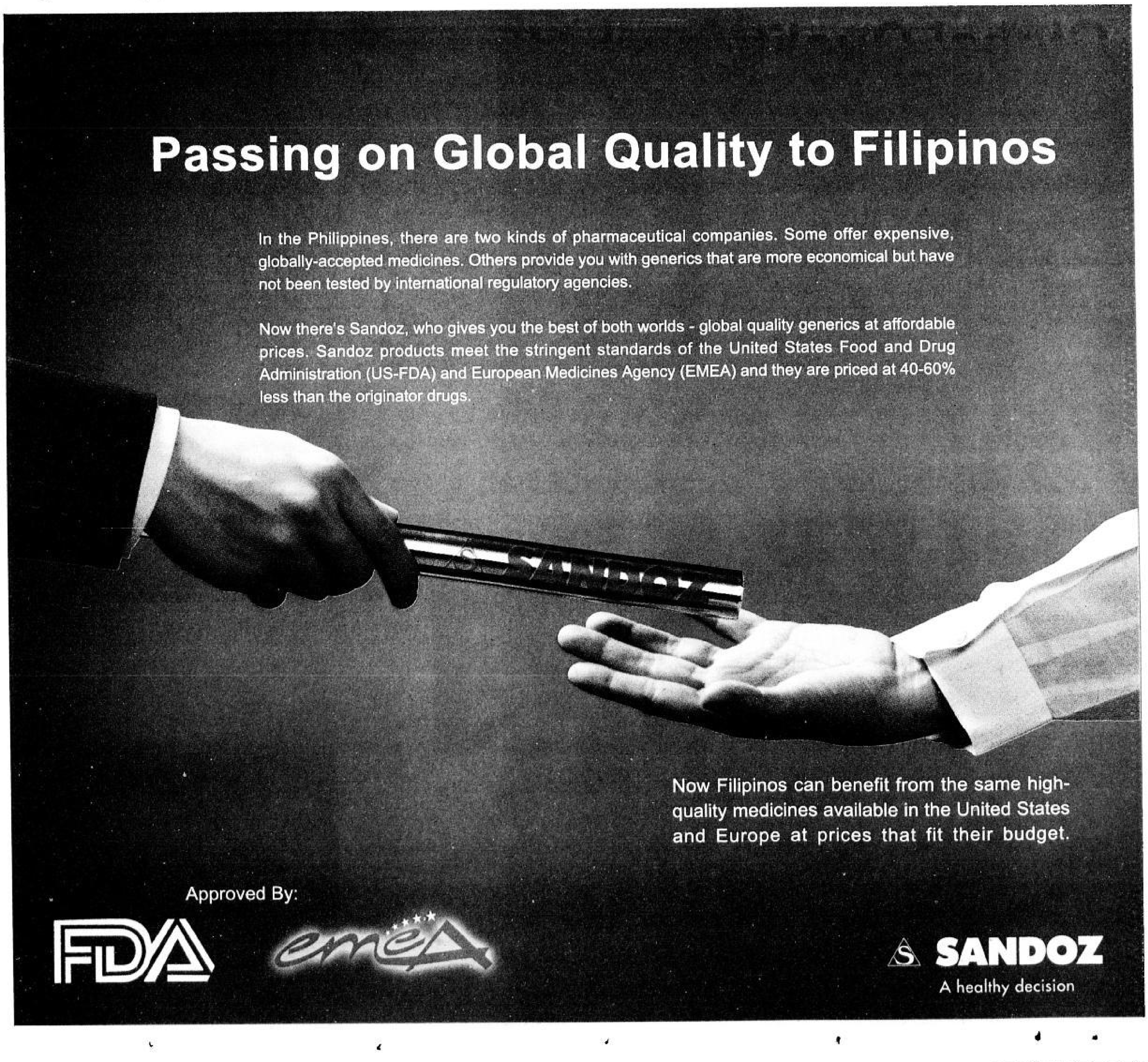
"In the first explosion, I saw people falling over, some of them blown apart. When the other bomb went off seconds later, it slammed me into a wall of my store and I fainted," said Khalil Ibrahim, 41, a shop owner. He was interviewed at a local hospital where he had been rushed to be treated for shrapnel wounds to his head and back.

When the attack occurred, police at a nearby checkpoint fired random shots in several directions, but residents soon rushed to the devastated area to see if friends or relatives had been killed or wounded.

In one area, mangled bodies were piled up at the side of the road and partially covered with paper. Two Iraqi men sat on a nearby sidewalk crying and sometimes covering their faces with their hands.

"The driver of the minibus lured the people to hire them as laborers, and after they gathered he detonated the vehicle," said another witness, Ali Hussein. Taking hold of an older man who was walking by in a daze with a bloody bandage tied around his head, Hussein said: "Look at this injured man. He comes from a big family."

In Baghdad, where many people are unemployed, scores of Iraqis gather in the square early in the morning to wait for minibuses or private cars that stop by and hire them for the day as construction workers, cleaners or painters. Nearby, small stands are set up to sell the laborers a breakfast of tea and egg sandwiches. *AP*



Passing on Global Quality to Filipinos

In the Philippines, there are two kinds of pharmaceutical companies. Some offer expensive, globally-accepted medicines. Others provide you with generics that are more economical but have not been tested by international regulatory agencies.

Now there's Sandoz, who gives you the best of both worlds - global quality generics at affordable prices. Sandoz products meet the stringent standards of the United States Food and Drug Administration (US-FDA) and European Medicines Agency (EMEA) and they are priced at 40-60% less than the originator drugs.

Now Filipinos can benefit from the same high-quality medicines available in the United States and Europe at prices that fit their budget.

Approved By:
FDA emea
SANDOZ
A healthy decision

The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

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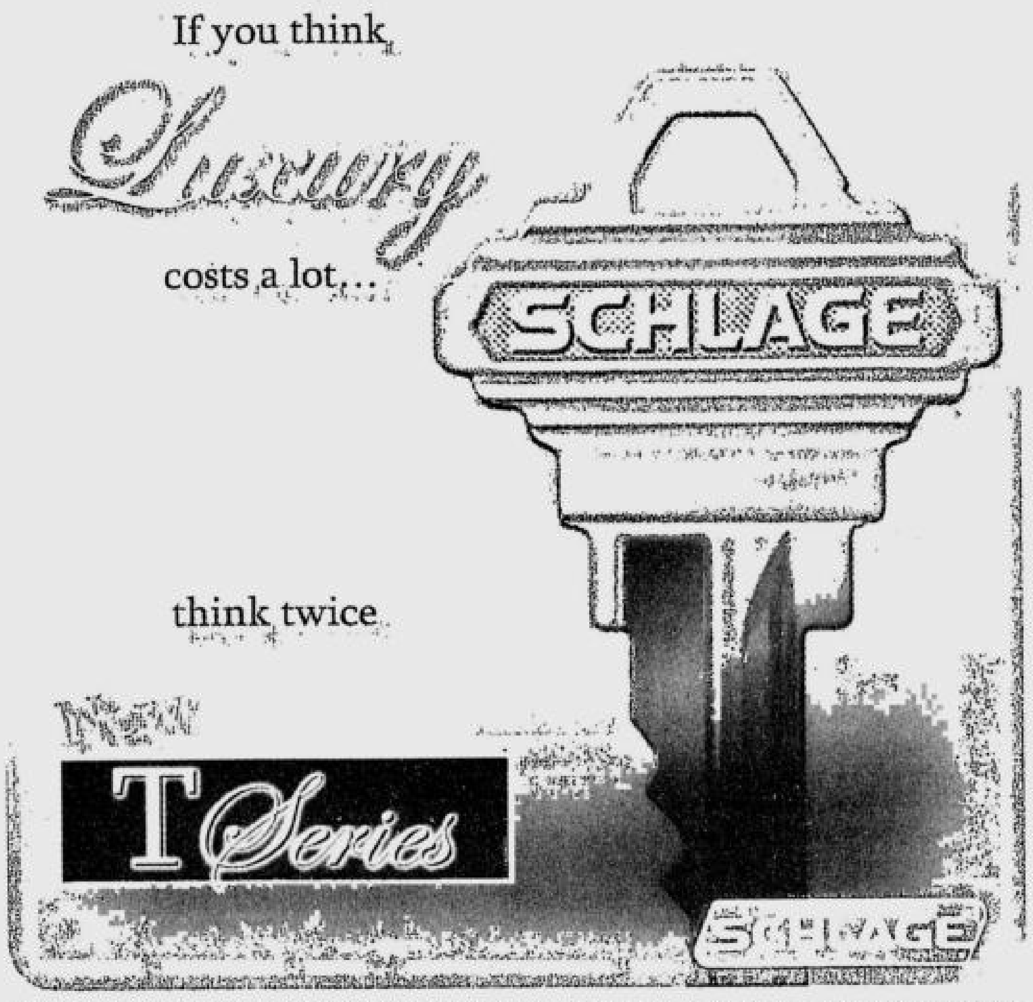
- **Former rebel leader** sweeps Aceh polls /A30
- **Grief, joy as Chile** bids farewell to Pinochet/A29
- **Arctic ice may all** melt by 2040—study /A28



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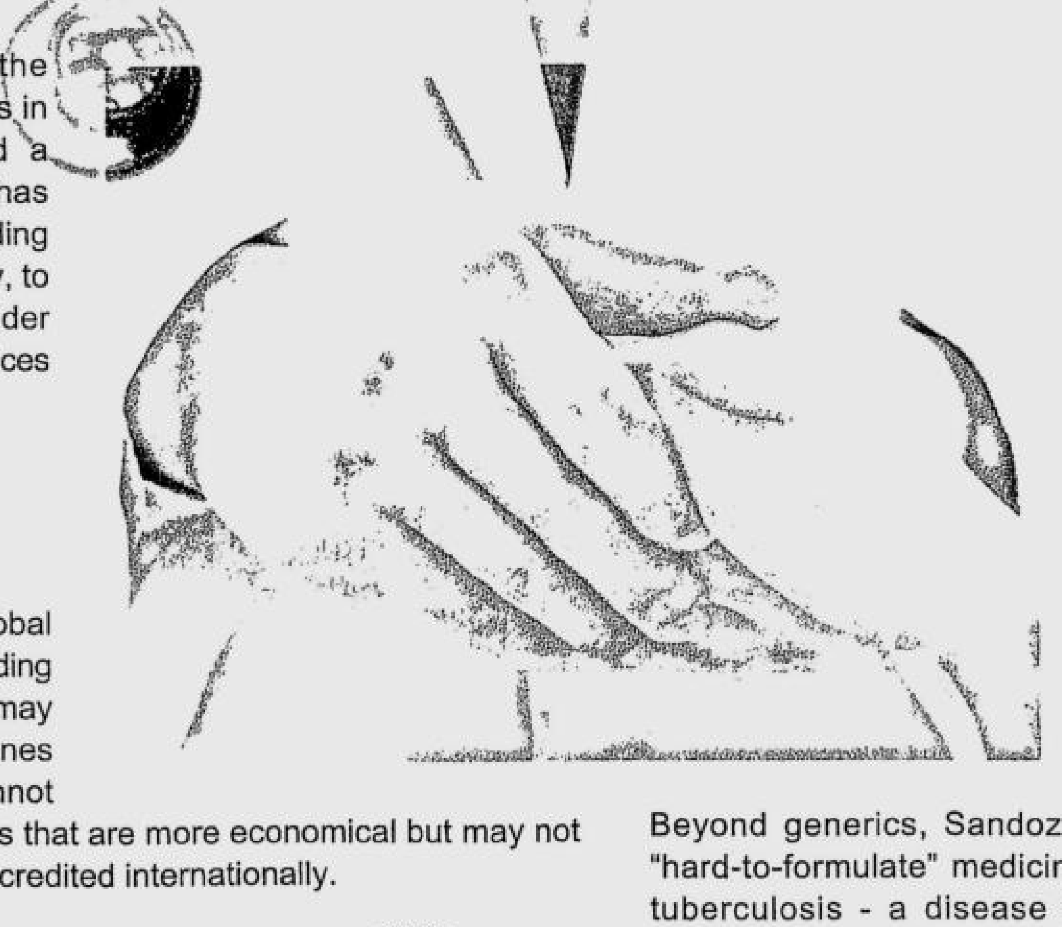
Per DTI-NCR Permit No.5263, Series of 2006

Global Quality and Affordability

The best of both worlds from Sandoz

Rapidly rising costs in healthcare is a serious concern in most of the developing countries, including the Philippines, with prices for medication soaring and budgets severely limited in the public health sector. Physicians often get caught in the middle - needing to provide the best and the most effective medical care but also forced to ensure that their patients can afford it. Meanwhile, patients end up paying with their health - lacking the money to buy medicine, they may allow curable diseases to go untreated.

Sandoz wants to be part of the solution. One of the world leaders in generic pharmaceuticals and a pioneer in the industry, Sandoz has now teamed up with Hexal, a leading generic manufacturer in Germany, to provide Filipinos with an even wider range of high quality generics at prices everyone can afford.



Globally accepted and affordable Generics

With Sandoz, affordability and global quality go hand-in-hand. Other leading manufacturers in the Philippines may provide globally-accepted medicines but at a price most Filipinos cannot afford. The alternative is generics that are more economical but may not have been tested in agencies accredited internationally.

Only Sandoz generics fit the Filipino's budget while meeting both local and global standards. They are not only accredited by the Bureau of Food and Drugs (BFAD) but have also passed the stringent quality standards of global agencies like the US Food and Drug Administration (US-FDA) and European Medicines Agency (EMEA).

Quality by design is an established concept in Europe so the EMEA not only does a comprehensive analysis of the active substance but also studies the manufacturing method. Called Process Analytical Technologies (PAT), this system focuses on building quality into the product as well as continuous process improvement so that the finished product consistently meets its predefined characteristics from the start.

In the United States, generic applicants must scientifically demonstrate to the FDA that their product is bioequivalent (i.e. performs in the same manner as the innovator drug) - one way of checking is to ensure that generics deliver the same amount of active ingredients into the patient's bloodstream in the same amount of time as the innovator drug. This means that you get generics of equal quality as the originator drug but at prices as much as 40-60% less. Now, the average Filipino family has access to potentially life saving medicine - the same medicines available in Europe and in the US.

Sandoz offers a wide range of products, including antibiotics, anti-hypertensives, cholesterol lowering drugs, anti-diabetes and anti-tuberculosis medicines.

Going Beyond Generics

Beyond generics, Sandoz is continuously studying ways to make "hard-to-formulate" medicines obtainable by all patients. Eradicating tuberculosis - a disease that kills even more than AIDS around the world - is a major goal for Sandoz. In partnership with the World Health Organization, Sandoz has pledged to treat 100,000 patients a year free of charge for five years - the first such pact between a United Nations agency and the private sector to fight the disease.

With their continued innovation in generics and constant efforts to promote affordable healthcare, Sandoz is our partner in making good health available to all.

Making global quality medicines affordable

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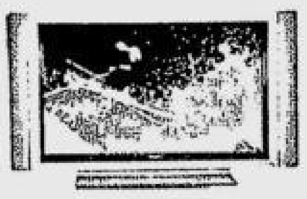

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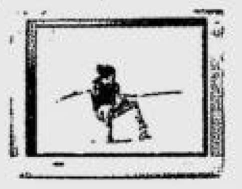

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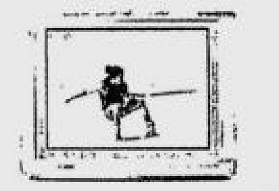

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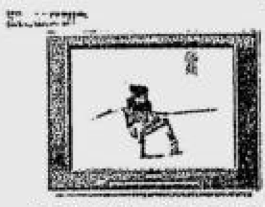

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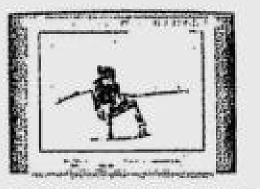

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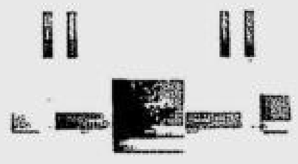

HTS9800 PHP59,990.00
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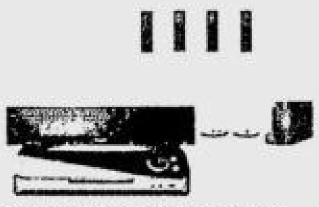

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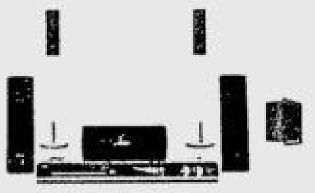

HTS3110 PHP17,990.00
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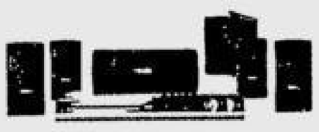

HTS3105 PHP11,990.00
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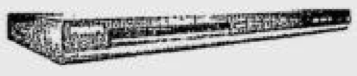

DVP5965K PHP5,990.00
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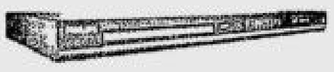

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DVP3026K PHP3,490.00
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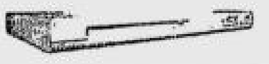

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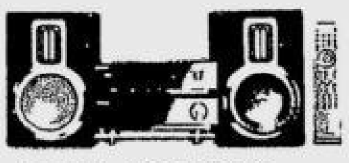

MCD700 PHP14,990.00
DVD Micro Theatre
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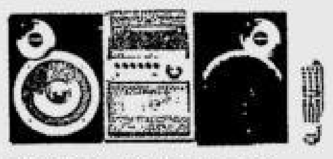
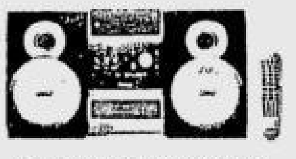
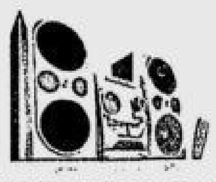


MCD515 PHP12,990.00
DVD Micro Theatre
6 months 0% interest



MCD190 PHP9,990.00
DVD Micro Theatre
3 months 0% interest



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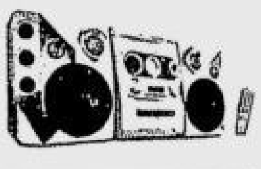
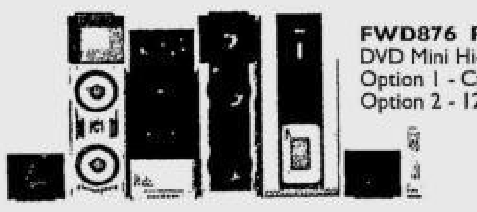


FWD573 PHP13,990.00
DVD Mini Hi-Fi System with 3 DVD Changer
6 months 0% interest



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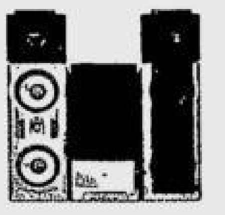

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DVD Micro Theatre
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Option 2 - 12 months 0% interest

FWD182 PHP9,990.00
DVD Mini Hi-Fi System
6 months 0% interest

FWV182 PHP5,990.00
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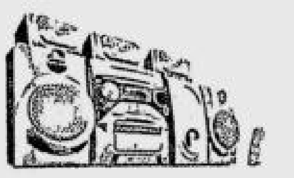

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TIME DEPOT
Give Time this Christmas
NAUTICA

Tipon reaches out for 3rd gold today

By Ted S. Melendres
Sports Editor

DOHA, QATAR—THE PRESSURE OF LANDING the gold already lifted by Violito Payla, bantamweight Joan Tipon climbs into the ring today seeking a bonus victory for the boxing team in the 15th Asian Games here.

JOAN TIPON: Less pressure

Tipon will be coming off a close referee's decision win against Thailand's Worapoj Petchkoom when he fights South Korea's Han Soon-chul in the second of six finals bouts closing the boxing competitions at the Aspire Hall 5.

The 24-year-old from Parañaque will start as the underdog, though, according to RP boxing officials.

"The Korean is tough and quick but Tipon can beat him," said Manny Lopez, president of the Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines.

Han, displaying a wide arsenal of punches, outpointed Mongolia's Badar Uugan Enkhbat in the semifinals, 29-19, to forge the gold-medal fight with the Bacolod-born Tipon.

Payla, the only other Filipino boxing finalist, whipped Somjit Jongjohor, 31-15, in the flyweight finals yesterday and avenged his three previous losses to the Thai.

"At least, *hindi na grabe ang* pressure *kay Tipon, mas maganda na ang* focus *sa* fight on hand," Lopez said.

Southeast Asian Games triple gold medalist Sheila Mae Perez returns to the pool when she competes with Ceseil Domenios in the 3-meter women's springboard preliminaries. Ceseil's brother Zardo and Nino Carog vie in the men's event starting at 10 a.m.

15TH ASIAN GAMES
DOHA 2006

The women archers take on Kazakhstan in the team event at 7:45 a.m. before the men collide with the host Qataris just before noon.

Mark Javier and Marvin Cordero got as far as the quarterfinals of the men's individual round before getting eliminated. Javier beat Kazakhstan's Segey Jhristich, 99-95, in the round of 16 but yielded to South Korea's Im Dong-hyun, 104-113, while Cordero beat Uzbekistan's Amet Umerov, 96-72, before bowing to Chinese Taipei's Kuo Cheng-wei, 97-106.

Wushu sends Lim Kenneth Ladica and Janice Hung to the preliminaries of the men's taijiquan and Pedro Quina and Willy Wang to the men's nanquan three-event qualification stage.

The wushu bidders, whom RP delegation officials expect to perform well here, has not won any medal so far after three days of the competition.

"The opposition is unbelievably strong," said an official who asked not to be named. "We can't blame anyone if they don't win a medal here. They (wushu officials) are aware that the Asian Games is a big stage with all the sport's finest athletes."

Shut out of the medals in the rowing events, Marvin Amposta opens the Filipinos' bid in canoe-kayak in the kayak single 500 meters at 9:10 a.m. Norwell Cajes is entered in the canoe single 500m while John Oliver and Victor Funelas are vying in the canoe doubles 500m heats.

RP Daily Schedule—Dec. 13

Archery

Starting at 7:45 a.m.—RP vs Kazakhstan (women's team event); RP vs Qatar (men's team event)

Boxing

Bantamweight final

2 p.m.—Joan Tipon vs Han Soon Chul (South Korea)

Canoe Kayak

9:10 a.m.—Kayak single 500m (Marvin Amposta)

9:40 a.m.—Canoe single 500m (Norwell Cajes)

10:50 a.m.—Canoe doubles 500m Heat 2 (John Oliver Victorio, Dany Funelas)

Diving

Women's 3m springboard preliminary (Sheila Mae Perez, Cesell Domenios)

Men's 3m springboard preliminary (Nino Carog, Zardo Domenios)

Fencing

9 a.m.—Men's team sabre (RP vs Iran)

Wushu

Men's Nanquan 3 Events combined (Quina Pedro, Wang Willy Reyes)

Men's Taijiquan (Lim Kenneth Ladica)

Women's Taijiquan (Janice Hung)

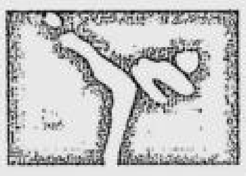
WHAT'S INSIDE

Carter, Kidd shine as Nets score /A38

Taekwondo jins arrive with five-medal haul

By Nikko Dizon

THE PHILIPPINE TAEKWONDO team returned yesterday from the 15th Asian Games in Doha—bemedaled and with their sights trained on the 2008 Beijing Olympics.



The taekwondo jins brought home a total of two silver and three bronze medals, the biggest number of medals so far won by any group from Team Philippines, said Robert Aventajado, president of the Philippine Taekwondo Association and chair of the Philippine Olympic Committee.

"This is our best performance so far," Aventajado said upon the team's arrival.

Of the 12-member team, Tshomlee Go and Antonette Rivero won silver medals, while Rivero's older brother, Manuel, Eunice Alora, and Veronica Domingo each won a bronze.

"The taekwondo field is tough because the world powers of taekwondo are in Asia. It's like fighting in the Olympics," Aventajado said.

"You can expect an equal or better performance from the taekwondo team in the Beijing Olympics."

Aventajado said that all the Filipino jins fielded in the Asian Games were "capable of winning medals" but that the drawing of lots for the elimination rounds played a big factor.

"It's rather tough to get through Korea (where the sport originated), for example. It's not that we're afraid of them but (it was) tough to move forward in the eliminations," he said.

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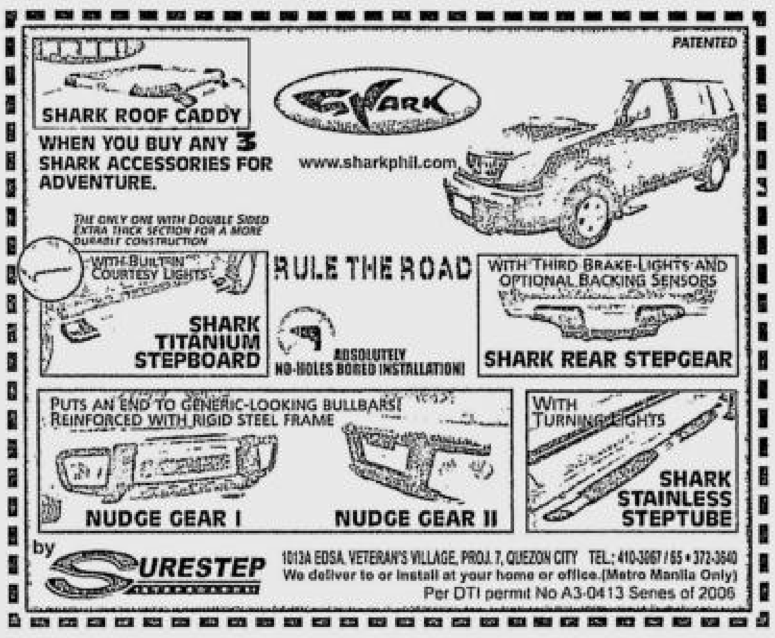
2006 ASIAN GAMES MEDAL TALLY

AS OF DEC 12; 9:18 P.M.

Nation	G	S	B	Total	Nation	G	S	B	Total
China	126	70	51	247	Mongolia	2	4	7	13
South Korea	46	40	73	159	Indonesia	2	2	10	14
Japan	45	54	60	159	Syria	2	0	3	5
Kazakhstan	19	13	32	64	Vietnam	1	9	6	16
Thailand	9	12	22	43	UAE	1	3	2	6
Taiwan	8	6	22	36	Jordan	1	3	1	5
Qatar	7	10	7	24	Lebanon	1	0	2	3
Saudi Arabia	7	0	4	11	Tajikistan	1	0	2	3
India	6	15	18	39	Myanmar	0	3	4	7
Uzbekistan	6	9	10	25	Kyrgyzstan	0	2	5	7
Bahrain	6	7	4	17	Iraq	0	1	1	2
Malaysia	5	11	9	25	Sri Lanka	0	1	1	2
Hong Kong	5	9	7	21	Turkmenistan	0	1	0	1
North Korea	5	8	13	26	Pakistan	0	1	0	1
Singapore	5	5	10	20	Nepal	0	0	3	3
Iran	4	13	12	29	Macau	0	0	2	2
Kuwait	3	4	2	9	Afghanistan	0	0	1	1
Philippines	2	4	9	15	Bangladesh	0	0	1	1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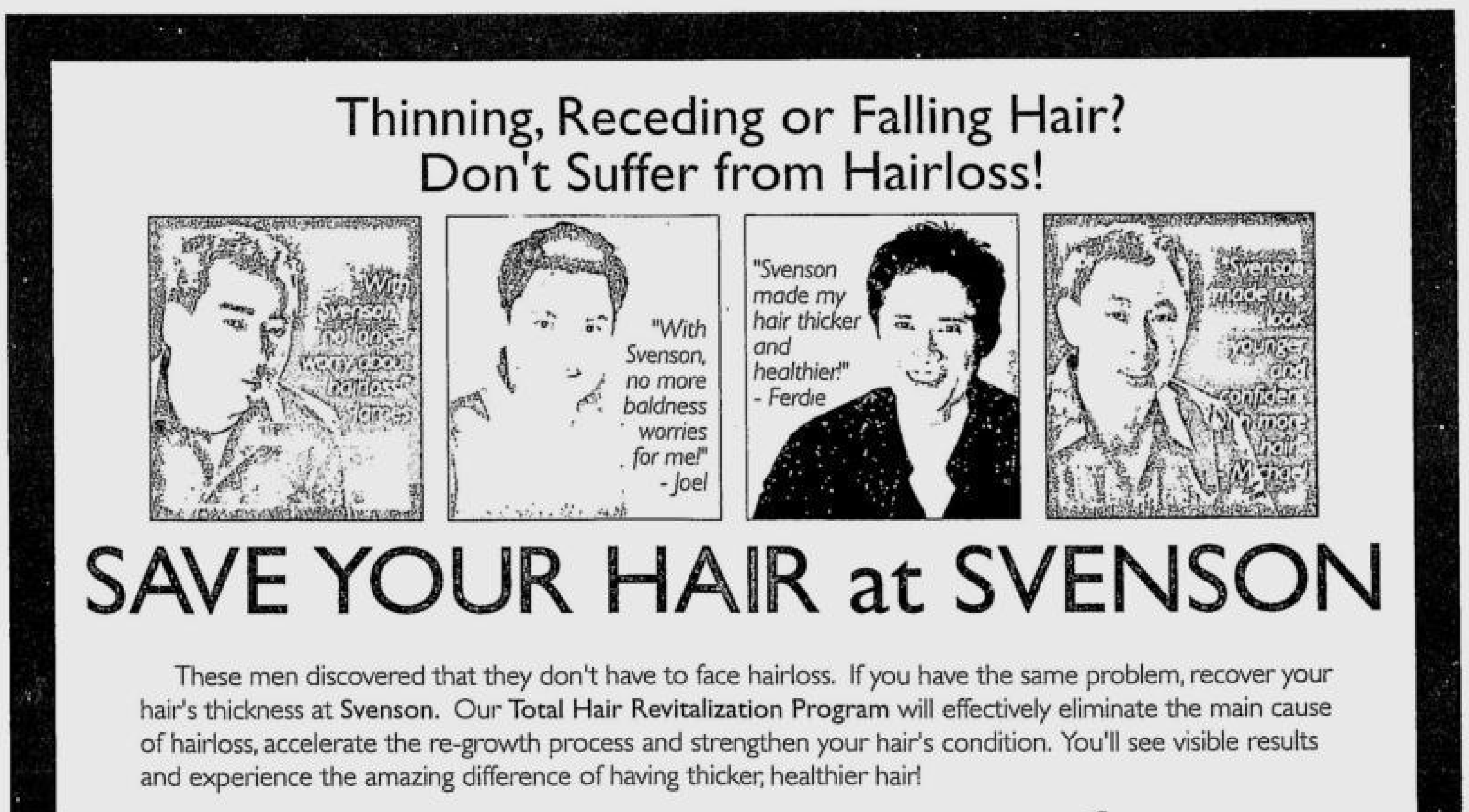
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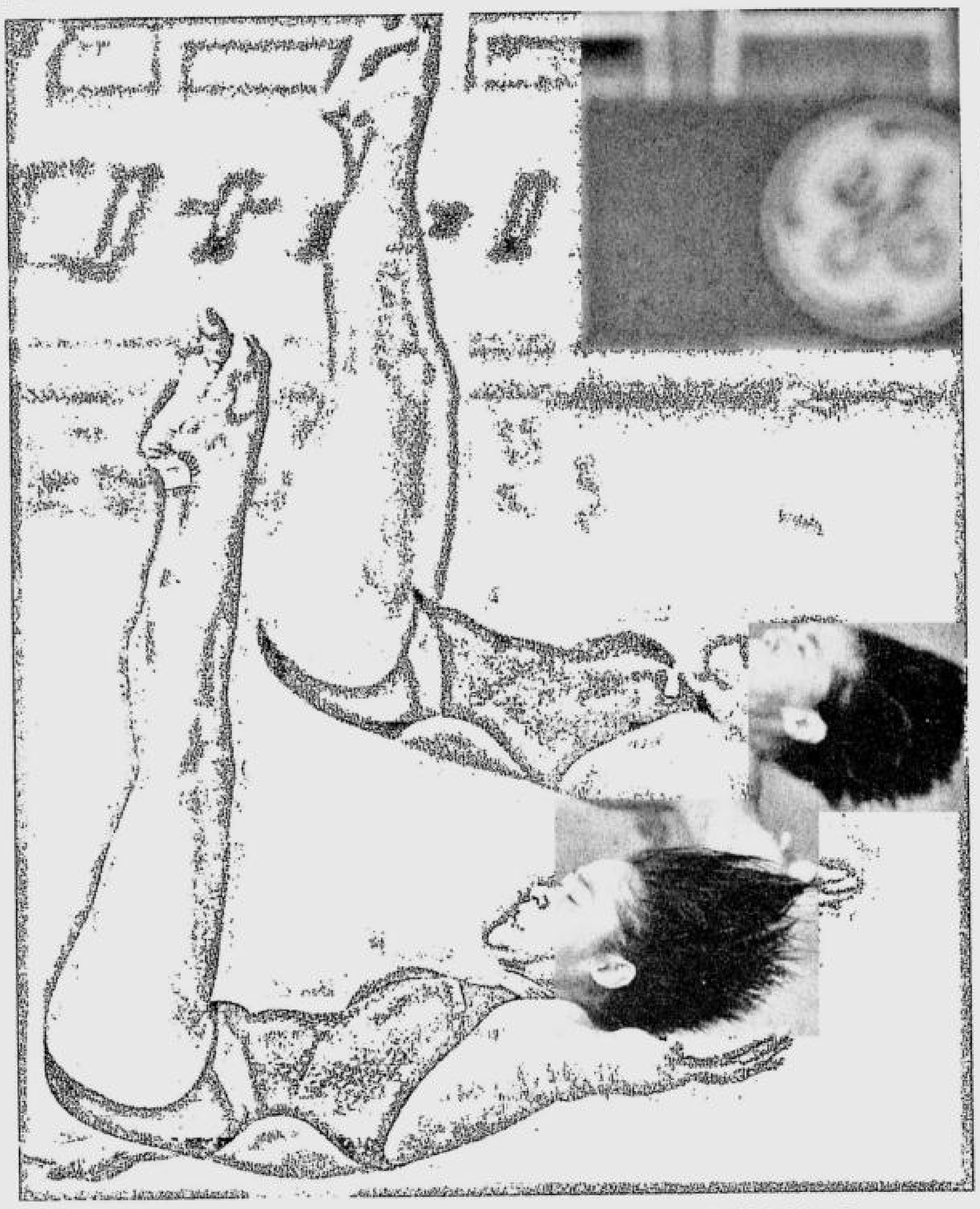


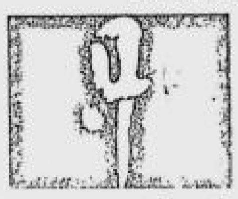
SHEILA Mae Perez and teammate Ceseil Domenios make their dive during the 15th Asian Games women's synchronized 3-meter springboard final. LYN RILLON

Coach stymies RP divers

By Ted S. Melendres

DOHA, QATAR—ZARDO DOMENIOS and Niño Carog took a dive, literally, and lost their chance for a medal in the men's synchronized 3-meter springboard final on Sunday.

The Filipino diving pair settled for fifth place in a field of eight at the 15th Asian Games here but only after their Chinese coach told them not to perform routines with higher degrees of difficulty but which merited better scores.



The coach, Zhang Dehu, told Domenios and Carog to skip the double and triple twists and to focus on simpler, lower-scoring routines.

"Kaya rin namin 'yung ginawa ng mga nagmedalya, pero ayaw ipagawa sa amin ni coach (We could also do the medalists' routines but our coach told us not to)," Domenios told sportswriters here.

"Sa Thailand na lang daw namin gawin 'yun (We were told to perform it in Thailand instead)," said Carog.

The divers said he was referring to the 2007 Southeast Asian Games in Bangkok, where the Filipinos will be among the favorites in the diving events.

Zhang, who also trains Domenios' sister Ceceil and Sheila Mae Perez, could not be reached for comment.

The world champion Chinese have dominated the sport here with Wang Feng and He Chong ruling the men's 3m springboard with 448.50 points and another pair nailing the gold in the women's event.

Domenios and Carog said Malaysia's Rossharisham Roslan and Ken Nee Yeoh took the silver medal with 393.36 points by performing the double and triple twists.

"Yung pinagawa sa amin ni coach *hindi talaga iiskor nang mataas* (Our routines just would not merit high scores)," the divers said.

South Korea's Kwon Kyung-min and Cho Kwan-hoon beat the Japanese tandem of Ken Terauchi and Yu Okamoto to the bronze with 391.68.

Domenios and Carog scored 351.78.

Tipon bids to join elite boxers' club

Negros Occidental champs

By Cedelf P. Tupas and Christian Irl Tan
Inquirer Visayas

JOAN Tipon: Treading a rich sporting tradition today. LYN RILLON

BACOLOD CITY—WHEN JOAN Tipon climbs the ring at the Aspire Hall 5 in Doha tonight, he will not only fight for an Asian Games gold medal but is aiming to continue a rich sporting tradition of his home province Negros Occidental.

A victory against South Korea's Soon Chul Han in the bantamweight finals will put the 24-year-old Tipon in an elite club of Negrense prizefighters, who have struck gold in the Asiad.

Twelve years ago, fellow Negrenses Mansueto "Onyok" Velasco and Reynaldo Galido, both from Bago City, and Bacolod's Elias Recaido gifted the Philippines with a gold medal each in the Asian Games held in Hiroshima, Japan.

Velasco brought home a silver medal that shone like gold to his countrymen two years later in the Atlanta Olympics, matching boxer Anthony Villanueva's feat in the 1964 Games.

Velasco's older brother, Roel, bagged a bronze in the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona, duplicating fellow Negrense Leopoldo Serrantes' finish in 1988 in Seoul.

"We are praying for him (Tipon) all the time. He has made our family very proud," Joan's mother, Fe, told the INQUIRER yesterday.

Fe said Joan had initially set a modest target right after graduating from Rafael B. Lacson National High School in Talisay eight years ago.

"Joan was not thinking about any big competitions when he asked permission from us. He said he just wanted to train with the national team in Baguio," added Fe, who saw his son in action live for the first time during the Southeast Asian Games held in Bacolod last year. "He loved the sport so much."

Fe said Joan learned to love the sport at 10 years old mainly because his father, Vicente, a fish vendor, would always bring him along to watch all boxing tournaments in Bacolod.

"We want to see our son in the Olympics next year," said Fe. Tipon, however, still has an immediate task at hand: win the Asian Games gold.

Gabica gets richer by ₱2.3M in Doha

IT'S GOING TO BE A MERRY, merry Christmas for Antonio "Gaga" Gabica and his family.

For winning the country's first ever singles gold medal in cue sports in the Asian Games, Gabica stands to get due recognition and enough money to enjoy for some time.

Under the incentives provided for Filipino medalists in the Asiad, the 34-year-old Gabica stands to receive a total of P2.3 million (P1.5 million for his 9-ball title and P.8 million for placing second in the 8-ball event).

Gabica, born in Sarangani province but raised in Lapu-Lapu City, said he drew inspiration from his family (wife Mari Jean, son Anton and daughter Antonella) and the blessed Virgin Mary in hacking out the victory at the expense of countryman and stablemate Jeffrey de Luna.

"My husband (Gabica) really wanted it (gold) especially after his heart-breaking loss in the 8-ball singles finals," said Jean in Filipino.

ANTONIO Gabica celebrates after copping the men's 9 ball pool singles title. LYN RILLON

She added that their family will be going to Cebu after Gabica's arrival on Dec. 16 to express their gratitude to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Jean, who said they've acquired some lots in Davao from Gabica's earnings as a pool player, said part of the incentive this time would be used to pay off their Chevrolet Aveo car.

"I'll give him hugs and kisses when he arrives," said Jean, adding that he'll also cook Gabica's favorite fish *paksiw*.

For his part, Ceferino "Perry" Mariano, benefactor of both Gabica and De Luna, said it's a long time coming for Gabica, whom he described as the most underrated local player.

"I know he'd finally make it after that sorry loss to (Satoshi) Kawabata in the 8-ball finals," said Mariano, who's also the backer of newly crowned World Pool champion Ronato Alcano.

Marlon Bernardino

GMA to welcome Asiad bets Dec. 19

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO is set to welcome the Doha Asian Games medalists on Dec. 19 in Malacañang.

This was announced yesterday by Bacolod Rep. Monico Puentevella, the first vice president of the Philippine Olympic Committee, who recommended the additional cash incentive for medal winners in the ongoing Asiad apart from those provided by law.

"From what I heard, the President has already set a date," said Puentevella. "This shows her full support to the national athletes who are doing the country proud in Doha."

The two-week long Asiad ends Dec. 15 and the athletes are expected back home two days later.

Puentevella claimed that the Filipino athletes seemingly got a morale booster after the President approved the additional bonus worth P500,000 for every gold, P300,000 for silver and P200,000 for bronze.

"Suddenly the medals started coming in," Puentevella told the INQUIRER. "This means that when the athletes could feel the support of their country, they will be pushing themselves harder in order to excel."

15TH ASIAN GAMES DOHA 2006

Under Republic Act 9064, an Asiad gold winner will get P1 million, a silver medalist P500,000 and a bronze medalist P100,000 out of Pagcor funds.

So far, billiards 9-ball champion and 8-ball runner-up Antonio Gabica is the richest among the athletes with an assured cash windfall of P2.3 million.

The Philippines so far has one gold, four silvers and six bronzes although it only won its first medal one week into the quadrennial competition.

Gold prospects are still expected in boxing, wushu and karate.

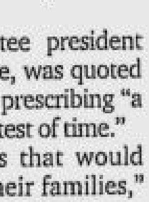
Puentevella added that the country's participation in the Doha Games could have been a lot better if the athletes underwent more foreign exposure which didn't happen due to a limited budget.

Still, the country has yet to duplicate the three golds won in Busan four years ago and is still far from the five-gold projection by the Philippine Sports Commission.

Marc Anthony Reyes

RP's first gold can't be a cure-all

BARE EYE



Recah Trinidad

THERE WAS ONE TEARFUL SCENE IN THE Doha Asian Games of Antonio Gabica being mobbed by Filipino fans after the billiards star landed RP's first gold medal late Monday.

It was, you bet, not unlike a movie with a happy ending—the hero springing in the nick of time to save hapless victims of a sea disaster.

Well, that said, let everybody be reminded that Gabica's gold could not be very different from the one finally one by boxer Roberto Jalnaiz in the 1990 Beijing Asian Games.

It was like this: There had been great desperation. Delegation officials had started to panic as the 1990 Asiad headed for the curtains with RP still unable to land a single gold.

In short, the frantic prayer was for Jalnaiz, the last Pinoy bet standing, to deliver.

Naturally, after Jalnaiz captured the lone RP gold by topping the bantamweight division, there was wild celebration in the RP camp as though the 1990 campaign had also been saved from total disaster.

* * *

Well, desperation could indeed give birth to fantasy.

It was Gabica's fault that the wait for RP's first gold in Doha had to be extended.

He fumbled and missed out in his first try for the big one in the 8-ball final; but he, nevertheless, recovered by topping compatriot Jeffrey de Luna in the 9-ball gold medal match.

Gabica was readily celebrated at the Doha pool hall like a long-coming savior.

But while Jalnaiz's 1990 gold was successfully peddled off like an instant cure-all for the faults and afflictions in Philippine sports, reality continued to prevail for the beleaguered RP delegation in Doha.

* * *

Despite having landed its first gold medal, the Philippines continued to languish behind Southeast Asian Games rivals, headed by powerhouse Thailand.

Well, the good news is that top Filipino sports officials no longer bothered to use Gabica's gold to mislead hometown fans.

There was no effort to foolishly delude this time.

Philippine Olympic Committee president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco, for one, was quoted by the POC press release mill as prescribing "a new program that can stand the test of time."

"We need full-time athletes that would train without worrying over their families," Cojuangco said. "We need good athletes that are dedicated and committed to train."

That, folks, indeed comes as a great relief.

But here's the bad news.

There's practically nothing new with what Cojuangco has been officially performing in the Doha Games.

* * *

Yes, just like his predecessors, Cojuangco is again coming up with a tired, worn-out diagnosis of what continue to ail Philippine sports.

He's playing physician to a patient that has long been languishing on the operating table.

The truth is, just like in past big foreign campaigns, RP delegations did not have to go far to unearth the myriad ailments besetting the national sports setup.

Of course, there were other self-styled leaders who, other than offer lame alibis, suggested a new overall plan that should involve all sectors.

You see, everybody out there in Doha, all the so-called bigwigs—from Cojuangco to Butch Ramirez of the Philippine Sports Commission—have their own perfect idea of how to cure and save RP sports.

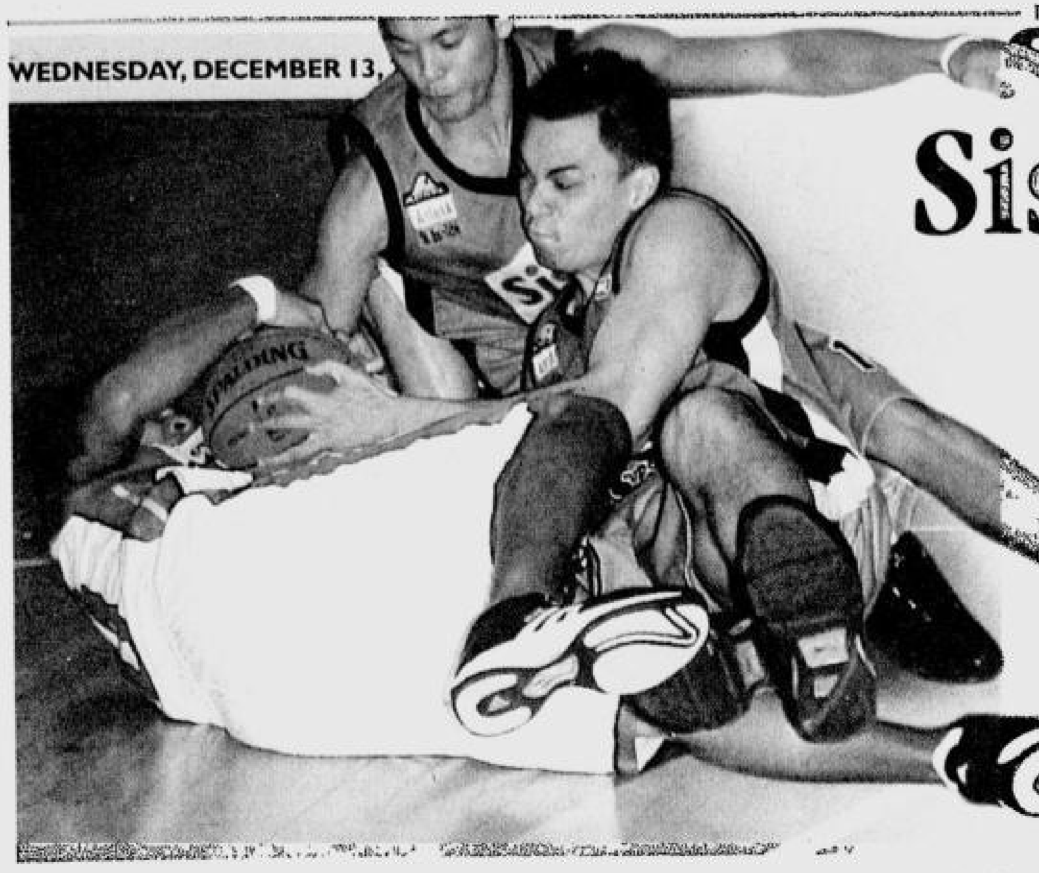
Wait until they come back. It will predictably be their favorite game again as they go for personal golds in their own proud ways.

They call this game dirty politics.

* * *

(HELP!: Here's one urgent text message from Bicol: "*Mga kapatid,* OC/Bangon team here in Legazpi. We visited affected areas in Guinobatan, Camalig and Daraga. The situation is worse than reported. You can see and smell the extent of devastation. *Amoy-patay pa rin.* We talked to victims. Many relatives died. We talked to a man who lost his four children and in-laws. We could only listen, cry with them, give little from my own pocket. Death toll is not only 500 as reported, 2,000 plus *na.* People need food and medicine. We've to do relief and medical mission here in an organized and efficient way. We are targeting at least 4,000 families. Hope you can still extend help the next few weeks. GBU)

Sista clobbers Harbour



GILBERT Malabanan and Nurjanjam Alfad of Henkel Sista try to steal the ball from Richard Alonzo of Harbour Centre during their game yesterday. ERIK ARAZAS

By Jasmine W. Payo

MARCY ARELLANO PACED A BALanced attack as Henkel Sista surged to an 80-72 triumph over Harbour Centre in the PBL Silver Cup yesterday at the Emilio Aguinaldo Gym.

The victory propelled the Super Sealers on top with the Hapee-PCU Teeth Masters, who bowed to the Magnolia Spinners, 79-67, in the second game.

"The players are starting to get the system, that we're a running team," said coach Caloy Garcia after Sista joined Hapee-PCU at 5-2. "It was a team effort—balanced scoring and balanced rebounding."

Arellano sparked the early 20-6 Sista charge to finish with 14 points in the Super Sealers' second straight win. Khiel Misa and Conrad Bauzon contributed a combined 24 points.

Notably missing in Harbour Centre's offensive equation was JC Intal, who nailed only two points.

The Spinners, who halted a two-game slide, started heating up late in the third period with Riego Gamalinda and Bonbon Custodio teaming up for 10 points for a 56-51 edge.

With Jeff Chan continuing the charge in the final canto, the Spinners posted their first double-digit lead, 63-53, with 8:26 minutes remaining.

"We issued extra passes, that's what we wanted, that's what we've been putting emphasis on during practice," said coach Koy Banal after the Spinners improved to 2-4.

The Port Masters fell to 2-3 like Cebuana Lhuillier-Pera Padala.

The scores:

First Game

HENKEL SISTA 80— Arellano 14, Misa 13, Bauzon 11, Malabanan 10, Gregorio 9, Saldua 8, Alfad 6, Ebuen 4, Eman 3, Bonus 2.

HARBOUR CENTRE 72 — Lanete 18, Gamboa 12, Vergara 10, Raymundo 8, Asoro 7, Alonzo 6, Gaco 5, Intal 2, Capati 2, Juntilla 2, Coching 0, Ortiguerra 0, Saguindel 0.

Quarters: 20-6, 36-25, 61-45, 80-72

Second Game:

MAGNOLIA 79—Aljamal 16, Chan 12, Gamalinda 9, Villanueva 9, Ekwe 8, Escobal 7, Barcellano 6, Custodio 6, Angeles 4, Taganas 2, Menor 0, Natividad 0.

HAPEE-PCU 67—Sanz 15, Rodriguez 13, Castro 11, Moreno 9, Borboran 5, Belga 5, Razon 4, Larong 3, David 2, Bucao 0, Amparado 0, Butel 0, Hugnatan 0.

Quarters: 18-16, 34-37, 56-51, 79-67

Archers test Warriors

TWO UNBEATEN SQUADS HANDLED BY brothers will fight for a championship berth in the FilOil-Flying V Homegrown Invitational Cup today at the PhilSports Arena.

The De La Salle Archers of Franz Pumaren and the University of the East Warriors coached by Franz's younger brother Dindo will clash in the Group B semifinals at 4 p.m.

The Far Eastern Tamaraws and the Jose Rizal Bombers will shoot for a title slot in the 2 p.m. semifinal battle in Group A.

Teams only played against schools in the opposing group during the elimination round with the Archers and the Warriors sweeping their respective groups.

The Tamaraws and the Bombers, the only NCAA squad left standing, topped their group with 3-2 cards.

Despite the sweep, coach Franz Pumaren claims the Archers haven't reached their full potential. His younger brother Dindo, though, thinks otherwise.

"La Salle is still a very strong team," said Dindo. "And since they haven't been competing, we know they're hungry and they want to win. So I told the boys we should match their intensity, especially at the defensive end."

In their five-game romp, the Archers relied mainly on JV Casio, Cholo Villanueva and Rico Maierhoffer at crunch time. *Jasmine W. Payo*

Pagadian forces KO fight with Tribu five

ILIGAN CITY—MAYor Sammy Co's Pagadian Explorers forced a knockout match with Arthro/Skygo-backed Tribu Sugbu Monday by scoring a 103-92 victory in the quarterfinals of the 2006 Spring Cooking Oil-NBC National Cup basketball tournament at the St. Michael's gym here.

Six players, led by Bong Marata and Melvin Mamaclay, scored in double figures as the Explorers erased the twice-to-beat advantage of the Tribesmen in the series supported by Sulpicio Lines, Spring Cooking Oil, Molten, Nature's Spring, Holiday Plaza Hotel-Cebu and Prime Channel.

Marata and Mamaclay fired 19 points each while Rob Johnson and Peter Naron chipped in 17 each. Mochael Orquillas and ex-PBA MVP Nelson Asaytono completed the Explorers' offensive thrusts with 12 and 10, respectively.

The Tribesmen of businessman Jonathan Guardo and Lito Gillamac, who finished with a 6-3 record in the classification round, trailed all the way.

Only veteran gunner Joel Co held his ground for Tribu with a conference high 25 points.

The Explorers led by 21 points at the end of the third quarter.

Pagadian seeks the league's third semifinal seat when it meets Tribu anew at 6 p.m. today at the St. Michael's gym here.

Spring-Tagaytay and North Cotabato earlier clinched the first two semifinal slots.

The scores:

PAGADIAN 103—Marata 19, Mamaclay 19, Johnson 17, Naron 17, Orquillas 12, Asaytono 10, Ayuk 8, Malcontento 1, Singedas 0, Pamaran 0, Sinco 0, Quilo 0

TRIBU SUGBU 92—Co 25, Mercado 13, Gadian 11, Almacin 10, Calo 10, Abelong 9, De Guzman 6, Sevilla 6, Santos 2, Arda 0, Ababon 0

Quarters: 26-24, 58-40, 86-65, 103-92

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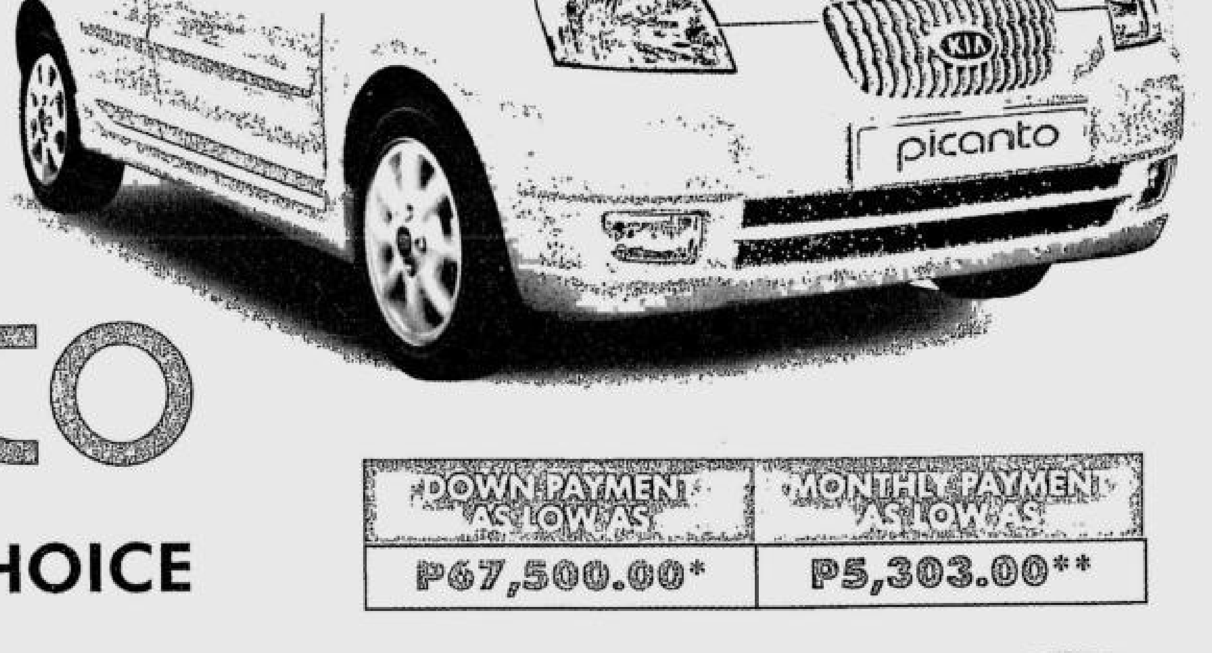

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WBC orders Pacquiao, Barrera camps to start fight negotiation

THE MEXICO-BASED WORLD BOXING COUNCIL (WBC) has directed the camps of Filipino superstar Manny Pacquiao and Mexican hero Marco Antonio Barrera to start negotiations for the mandatory defense of Barrera's super featherweight title.

"The free negotiations period for the mandatory title defense has begun. If no agreement is reached the WBC will conduct a purse offer on Jan. 12, 2007 in Mexico City," said the WBC in an announcement posted on its website yesterday.

The move is perceived as a setback for promoter Bob Arum of Top Rank, who has been lobbying for a March bout for Pacquiao possibly against World Boxing Associaiton (WBA) champ Edwin Valero.

Valero's camp, according to sources, is reportedly not too keen on facing Pacquiao at this point, opting to give the Venezuelan two or three more bouts before facing the iconic Filipino.

Pacquiao, who is tied in a legal tug-of-war between Arum and Oscar De La Hoya's Golden Boy Promotions, is resting after his third-round annihilation of Mexican Erik Morales last Nov. 18.

If Pacquiao and Barrera fail to come to terms, a purse bid takes place in Mexico to determine who will promote the fight and how much each fighter is going to earn for the fight.

A 75-25 split in favor of the champion usually happens in a purse bidding. But owing to the marquee value of Pacquiao, that may not be the scenario especially if GBP wins the purse bid.

A victory by Golden Boy in the purse bidding would probably give Pacquiao the most money possible and the least problems considering Arum's not-too-cozy relationship with WBC president Jose Sulaiman.

Barrera, in an on-line poll, is considered by majority of boxing fans as the most worthy opponent for Pacquiao. The Mexican also hopes to avenge his earlier loss at the hands of the Filipino in 2003.

A March 11 playdate has already been reserved by the WBC for Barrera's defense. *Salven L. Lagumbay*

MANNY Pacquiao (right) lands a solid right on the fa

Cebu hosts World Cup in February

CEBU CITY—THE COUNTRY'S BOXING CAPital will host the country's biggest boxing spectacle next year.

Cebu sportsman Antonio L. Aldeguer, who heads the ALA Boxing Gym, yesterday announced his group has agreed to bring to Cebu the World Cup of boxing set to take place on Feb. 25, 2007.

Aldeguer made the final decision after conferring with his son Michael—who manages ALA fighters in the US—as well as chief lieutenant Sammy Gello-ani and ALA chief trainer Edito Villamor.

"We are confident of getting the assistance of Cebu Gov. Gwen Garcia as well as Mayors Tom Osmeña and Thadeo Ouano," said Aldeguer, who said they were eyeing the Cebu International Convention Center as venue.

Aldeguer's ALA Boxing Gym and SGG Sports Promotion of Sammy Gello-ani have inked a deal with Oscar De la Hoya's Golden Boy Promotions for the promotion of talents like Rey 'Boom Boom' Bautista and Z 'The Dream' Gorres.

The World Cup card will be headlined by Bautista challenging WBO super bantamweight champ Daniel Ponce De Leon.

In the other mainers, Gorres and Gerry Peñalosa will challenge WBO superfly champ Fernando Montiel and WBO bantam champ Jhonny Gonzalez, respectively. *Salven L. Lagumbay*

P1 million cash, Toyota Avanza staked for aces

ONE MILLION CASH AND A TOYOTA AVANza are dangled as hole-in-one prizes in the Eagle Ridge Invitational which caps the year's series of member-guest tournaments on Dec. 16-17 at the country's biggest golf complex in Gen. Trias, Cavite.

The cash prize put up by CICI Insurance and the Avanza staked by Toyota Motor Philippines, Corp. will be up for grabs to a maximum field of 360 players in the event that will be played in three of the four championship courses of Eagle (Aoki, Norman and Faldo).

Exciting tournament and raffle prizes are provided by HSBC, Petron, WG Construction, G-Shop, Philippine Airlines, GG&A Club Development, Inc. while giveaways are subsidized by PacSports. Bacardi is hosting the awarding ceremony on Sunday.

Those in Class A will play Faldo on Saturday and Norman on Sunday, the Class B cast tackles Aoki and Faldo in succession and Class C participants will first tee off at Norman and then Aoki.

A Family Weekend where other events (bowling, badminton and three-point shootout) and a Christmas Bazaar will also be held. For inquiries, call 046–4192841 or 742–4265 (Alvin Ortega and Janice Aguilar).

Mayor Fernando chessfest Sunday

THE CHRISTMAS EDITION OF THE MAYOR'S CUP Inter Barangay Active Chess Team Championships reels off on Sunday at the Marikina Sports Park in Marikina City. There will only be three players per team. Team winners will receive cash prizes in the Seniors and Juniors (14 and below) category aside from trophies and medals courtesy of Mayor Marides Fernando. Meanwhile, registration for the 9th Alay kay Mayor Marides Carlos Fernando (Part 2) 1900 and below Active Chess Tournament gets underway on Saturday in the same venue. Organized by Marikina Chess Federation (MCF) president Johnny "Joel" Gaudia and MCF secretary general Rudy Ibañez, the event is open to players with rating 1900 and below. The tournament offers cash prizes and trophies to the winners with the champion getting the lion's share of P4,000. Registration fee is P150. For inquiries, call Gaudia at 0910–6268874 and 947–6993 and Ibanez at 0920–8460780. Registrations are now accepted at the MCF Headquarters at 24 Exequiel St. Paliparan, Sto. Niño, Marikina City. ***NM Marlon Bernardino, contributor***

EXPERIENCE
THE THRILL

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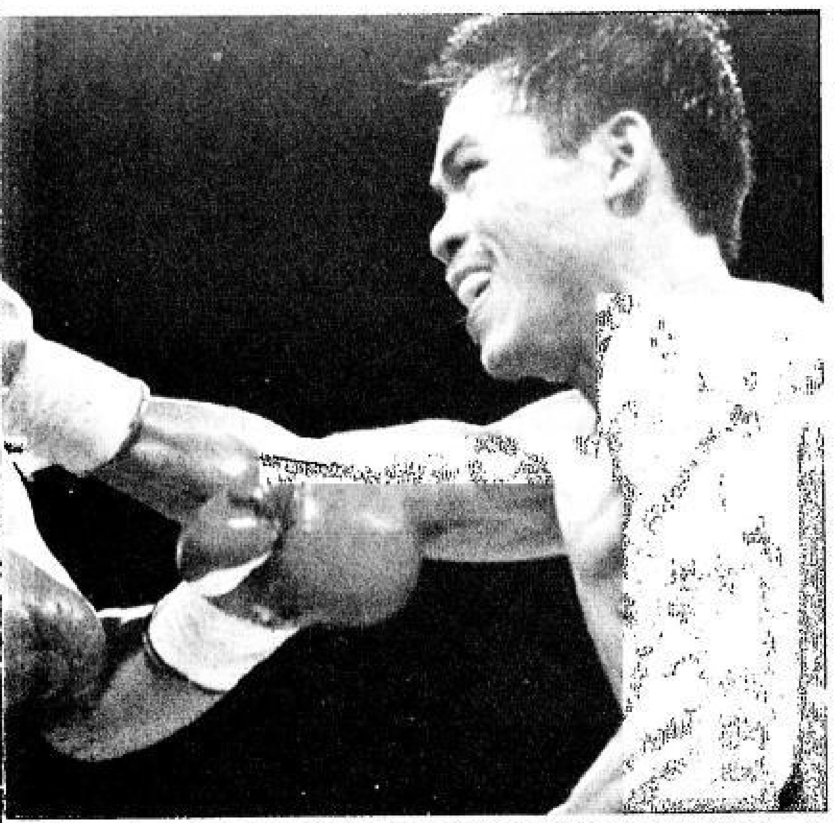


e of Marco Antonio Barrera during their first meeting on Nov. 15, 2003. AP

J-Ro assured of fat Lexus Cup paycheck

By Jong Arcano

WIN OR LOSE, JENNIFER ROSALES will get her biggest paycheck in the LPGA season this week in Singapore.

Rosales is guaranteed at least $30,000 (about P1.5 million) for just joining Team Asia in a showdown with Team Europe in the Lexus Cup 2006 starting Friday at the Tanah Merah Country Club in Singapore.

J-Ro is of one of the two captain's picks of the Asian side chosen by Grace Park and with it comes the chance to pick up the pieces of what has been her worst season as a professional.

Bugged all season by a hurting wrist and unable to make a new swing work, the 28-year-old Rosales was in the money in just six of the 36 LPGA events without a single top 10 finish.

She got her biggest pay this year of $15,631 as the 31st placer in the Michelob Ultra in Virgina although her 29th place finish which paid her $14,199 in the Kraft Nabisco was her best showing. She wound up 123rd in the money list with earnings of $48,113.

But Park apparently decided not to look at the numbers and decided to go for J-Ro's popularity in the region when she included her and Taiwanese Candie Kung to join the eight Koreans who made the grade for the Asian squad in the Ryder Cup-style competition.

They will try to avenge an 8-16 loss to the International side which is captained by Annika Sorenstam last year at the same course.

Friday's matches will consist of six better ball matches.

The Asian team boasts a total of six LPGA victories against the seven by the International players who will be missing Lorena Ochoa, the Mexican who dislodged Sorenstam as the No. 1 player on Tour this year.

Rosales won the 2004 Chick Fil-A championship and the 2005 season opener—the SBS Open.

The lineups:

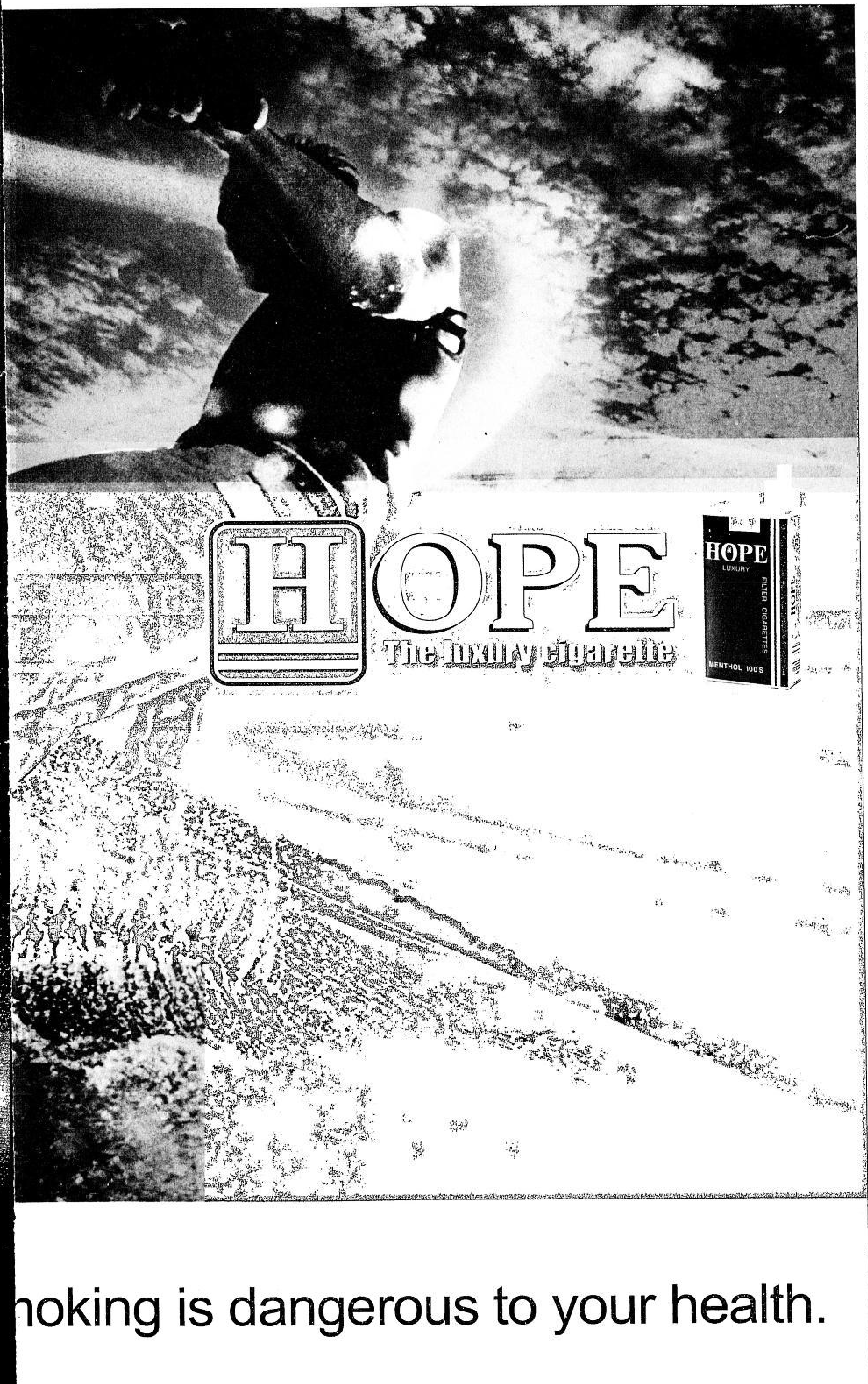
Team International

Annika Sorenstam (captain) (Sweden), Paula Creamer (United States), Julieta Granada (Paraguay), Natalie Gulbis (US), Brittany Lincicome (US), Sherri Steinhauer (US), Stacy Prammanasudh (United States), Angela Stanford (US), Nikki Campbell (Australia), Morgan Pressel (US), Laura Davies (England), Carin Koch (Sweden)

Team Asia (Korean unless specified)

Grace Park (captain), Se Ri Pak, Hee-Won Han, Seon Hwa Lee, Jee Young Lee, Meena Lee, Shi Hyun Ahn, Joo Mi Kim, Jennifer Rosales (RP), Sakura Yokomine (Japan), Young Kim, Candie Kung (Taiwan)

ROSALES



SPORTSWATCH

Wrestling at Cineplex

THE BIGGEST BATTLE OF THE SEASON FEATURING today's most prominent wrestling superstars will be shown on Dec. 18 at 9 a.m. through a live via satellite match of WWE Armageddon at Gateway Cineplex 10 at the Araneta Center Major battles to be featured include the Dream Tag match pitting Batista and John Cena versus King Booker and Mr. Kennedy; the Inferno Match featuring Montel Vontavious Porter (MVP) versus Kane; and the Last Ride Match, where the Undertaker battles it out with Mr. Kennedy. Two major championship battles are also lined up—the United States Championship where bitter rivals Chris Benoit and Chavo Guerrero are set to collide once again; and the cruiserweight championship featuring Gregory Helms versus Jimmy Wang Yang.

Koi Village in finals

KOI VILLAGE BESTED NATIONAL INTERCLUB champion Wang's-PRC, 95-82, to clinch the first finals berth in the 2006 PICAA Open basketball tournament at the La Consolacion gym in Mendiola, Manila. Danny Capobres, E.J.Feihl and Nani Epondulan buckled down to work and combined for 71 points as the Magallanes-based team of sports patrons Terry Que and Jimi Lim extended its winning streak to 11 games in the season-ending tournament. Capobres finished with a game-high 27 points, including 11 in the fourth quarter, for Koi, which topped the elimination round with a 0-0 win-loss record. Feihl added 23 points and Epondulan contributed 21. Ex-pro Biboy Simon and Ryan Regalado shared scoring honors for Wang's-PRC with 17 points apiece. Playing team manager Alex Wang added eight points, six from three-point range. Pacific Supertex rode on the heroics of Ferdie Go to nip UCM Auto Aircon-Lyceum, 77-71, and forge a playoff for the second finals berth. Go fired 15 of his game-high 23 points in the payoff period to power the Estong Ballesteros-mentored Kings to the come-from-behind victory.

Makati Salpukan round 2

SIXTY FIGHTS WILL SPICE UP THE SECOND round eliminations of Pamaskong Salpukan 6-cock derby at Makati Coliseum today. Four entries took the early lead after posting three wins apiece on Monday's opening round: Ika Pasko Sa Pasay Dec. 15 of Butchoy Olano and Lito Roque, Sierra Madre Ridge of Jerome Mercado and Pogi I and II of Berting group. Promoters Lito Orillaza, Rudy Salud and William Co of WTJ Sports and Amusement Corp. said today's winners (three pointers) will share in the P100,000 day prize. The total guaranteed prize amounts to P3 million for an entry fee of P11,000. Cockers and breeders who want to join may still field an entry on Dec. 16, 18 and 23. Two days of championship rounds are set Dec. 27 and 30. For info call 896-3545 and 895-6475.

Roligon derby finals

WHO AMONG THE 37 TOP QUALIFIERS WILL drive home the brand new, seven-seater Toyota Avanza 1.5? This will be answered today as the Apordabol Incredibol 5-cock derby championship round gets underway at Roligon Mega Cockpit with some 100 matches scheduled. Derby host Rolly Ligon explained that the brand new car is a bonus for the fastest win champion. Early favorites include Rey Briones who won the Nissan Serena in last year's Apordabol derby, Pol Derpo, Sam Mendoza of Cainta, Rep. Danny Lagbas, Dado Andal, Enjie Nas, Tony Mendoza, Madison Go, Roger de Guzman, Juan Jordana, Rey Calbe, Alex Wolcott, Joseph Chua, Boy Jalandoni and Arman Garcia. Meanwhile, Roligon's Fastest Win One-Cock Ulutan resumes on Friday with Ronnie Lacsina, Jerry Ang and Ben4 Nadurata as hosts. Call 851-2275; 833-1638 and 852-9812 for details.

Rambulan starts Dec. 16

SAN JUAN COLISEUM'S CHRISTMAS RAMBULAN 6-cock derby, dangling a guaranteed prize of P2 million, starts at 2 p.m. on Saturday with the 3-cock elimination round (90 fights or more). Entries must be presented at SJC office on Friday, from 2-9 p.m. The derby will be supported by members of the Gentlemen Cockers Association of the Philippines (GCAP), National Cockers Association (NCA), Pasay Cockpit Cockers Association (PCCA), SJC Circuit Club as well as derbyists from Central Luzon. Participants will receive a Christmas gift from host and SJC owner R. Pineda. For info call 725-5369 and 725-6563 or 0917-8264018 (Maan).

RACING

By TOP CHOICE

Race 1—(Qrt/Tri)—Royal Rose (4), Kalashnikov/Happy Again (2), Millenium Man (3), Morning Nell (5)

Race 2—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Manila Slew (11), Graceful Conqueror (9), American Idol (14), Revelation (1), Blitzkrieg (2)

Race 3—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Letshaveaparty (9), Desert Breese (3), Ginja (10), Daddy's Girl (1), My Sheikh (5)

Race 4—(Qrt/Tri)—Boxster (2), Real Black (8), Virgin Hill (6), Saptenarian (4)

Race 5—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Dona Gelay (11), Hok Kee Hok (2), Little Girl (9), My Rabbonnie (10), Silver Place (14)

Race 6—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Friendly Venture/Tiger Rally (11), Inca (4), Shipman (7), Hazit Coming (8), Bundok Peninsula (9)

Race 7—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Ravishing Raffy/Imperator (13), Piroutte (6), Gigi's Gold (2), Heart of Jonna (4), Pure Energy (3)

Race 8—(Super 6/Qrt/Tri)—Miss Malabon (5), Fine Offer (13), Angel Eyes (2), Lovely Tara (4), Princess Dancer (12), Hurry Prince (1)

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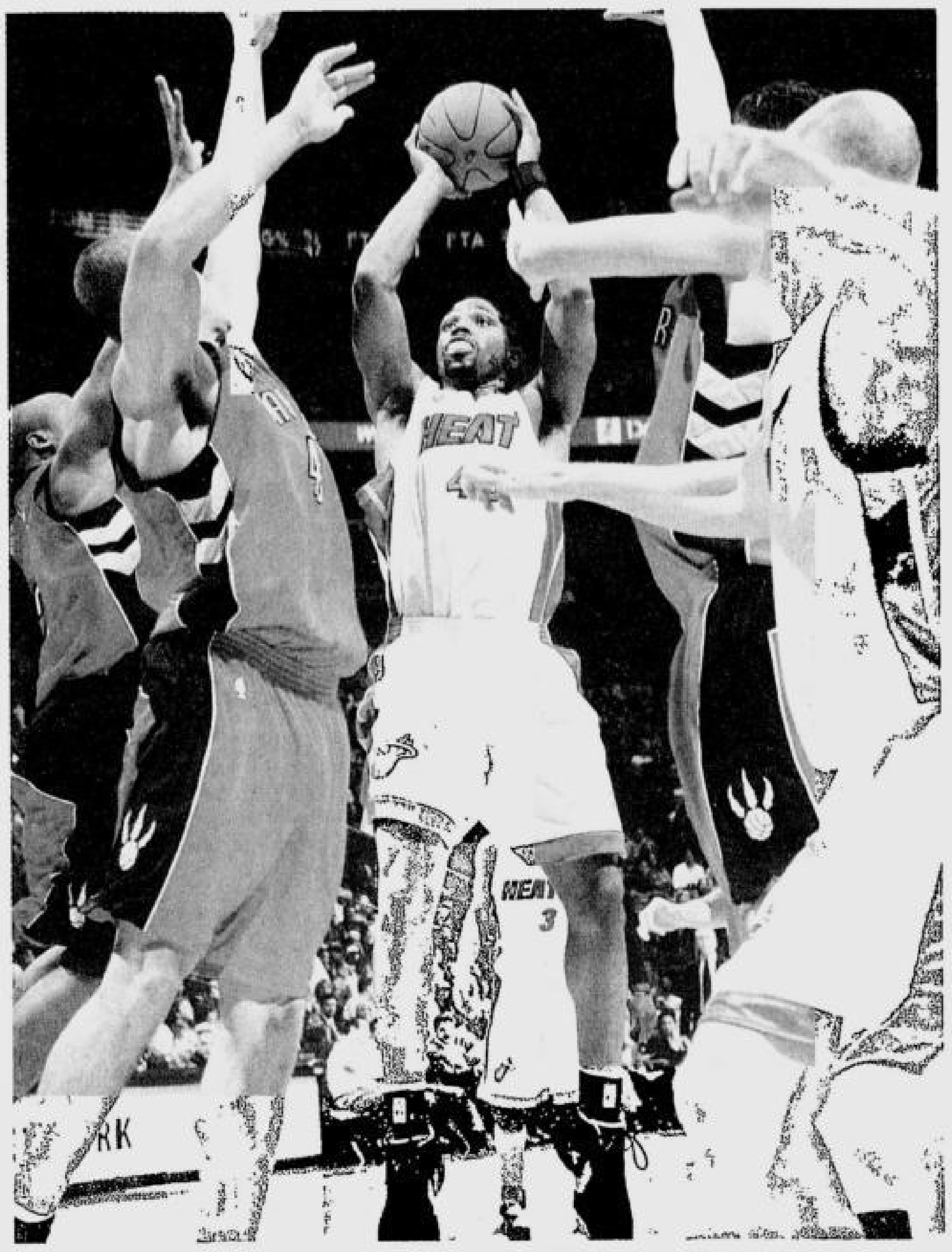
Carter, Kidd shine as Nets score



MIAMI forward Udonis Haslem (40) tries to get a shot off a phalanx of Toronto defenders. AFP

EAST RUTHERFORD, NEW JERSEY—JASON KIDD climbed to third on the career triple-double list to help the New Jersey Nets beat the Memphis Grizzlies, 105-92, on Monday.

The win also snapped a three-game losing streak for New Jersey (8-12), and allowed the Nets to stay top of the Atlantic Division standings despite their sub-.500 record.

Vince Carter also set a franchise record with nine three-pointers on the way to 37 points and New Jersey tied a team record by making 15 shots from beyond the arc in 30 attempts.

Kidd picked up his 79th career triple-double to move ahead of Wilt Chamberlin on the all-time list. He finished with 12 points, 13 assists and 10 rebounds.

The Nets shot 48 percent from the field, held the Grizzlies to a season-low 10 points in the first quarter and led 52-38 at the half. It was just the third win in 11 games for the Nets, who have had trouble getting production from their bench players this season.

Richard Jefferson had 16 points for the winners and Nenad Krstic added 14, New Jersey soaring to an 18-point lead at the end of three quarters before coasting to victory.

Chucky Atkins led the Grizzlies with 26 points but Memphis lost their third straight game and eighth in 11.

In Miami, Dwyane Wade tied a season-high with 37 points to help the Miami Heat roll over the Toronto Raptors, 99-77. Toronto's Chris Bosh missed his second straight game with a knee injury.

Toronto took a 25-24 lead at the start of the second quarter on a Morris Peterson field goal. But Miami used an 18-2 run in a 3:28 span to take a 42-27 advantage it did not relinquish. James Posey keyed the spurt with five points.

In Chicago, Ben Gordon scored 23 points off the bench and Luol Deng added 22 to lift the Bulls over the shorthanded Indiana Pacers, 106-91.

Indiana starters Jermaine O'Neal, Al Harrington and Stephen Jackson all missed the game.

Harrington and reserve Marquis Daniels were held out because of a stomach ailment. O'Neal also was sick, but wouldn't have played anyway because of a hamstring injury. Jamaal Tinsley scored 21 points despite being ill.

Jackson was suspended because of his heated exchange with coach Rick Carlisle, who kicked him off the bench in a lopsided loss to Cleveland over the weekend.

Chicago shot 83 percent in the first quarter, converting 15 of 18 field goals to outscore Indiana, 42-25. Andres Nocioni scored 11 points and Deng added 10 in the quarter. Nocioni finished with 19.

Reuters

COMPLETE NBA RESULTS: Portland 81, Philadelphia 79; Phoenix 103, Orlando 89; New Jersey 105, Memphis 92; Boston 97, NY Knicks 90; Miami 99, Toronto 77; NO/ Oklahoma city 95, Cleveland 89; Chicago 106, Indiana 91; Utah 101, Dallas 79; San Antonio 103, LA Clippers 81

NBA ON SOLAR SPORTS:

8 a.m.—Denver vs Atlanta (replay at 4 p.m.

11:30 a.m.—Sacramento vs Golden State (replay at 9:30 p.m.)

It's back to the leather ball

NEW YORK—THE NATIONAL BASKETball Association will abandon use of its new microfiber composite game ball and revert to the leather model beginning Jan. 1.

The league sent a memo to its teams Monday, telling them that the change would be made for the remainder of the 2006-07 season. In the memo, NBA president Joel Litvin said that Spalding had 450 new leather balls ready for use.

"Our players' response to this particular composite ball has been overwhelmingly negative and we are acting accordingly," NBA commissioner David Stern said in a statement. "Although testing performed by Spalding and the NBA demonstrated that the new composite basketball was more consistent than leather, and statistically there has been an improvement in shooting, scoring, and ball-related turnovers, the most important statistic is the view of our players."

Players have complained about the new ball since training camp, saying that it bounced differently than the old one—both off the floor and the rim. They also said the synthetic material damaged the skin on their hands.

"For the league to be successful, obviously the players have to be happy. The basketball is the most important thing to us," said a smiling LeBron James, one of the stars who criticized the new ball.

"Like I said before, you can change the dress code, you can make our shorts shorter, but when you take our basketball away from us, that's not a transition we handle."

AP

No more AI trade talk, says Cheeks

PHILADELPHIA—MAURICE Cheeks is tired of talking about Allen Iverson. The Sixers coach might not have to deal with Philadelphia's biggest distraction much longer.

Iverson's days with the 76ers are numbered and the NBA's leading scorer may soon have his trade demand granted. With four games this week, including Monday's game against Portland, the Sixers seem unlikely to let to the situation fester and are prepared to deal their franchise player.

Cheeks was peppered with questions about Iverson at Monday morning's shootaround, but said his only focus was on the players in the locker room and snapping the Sixers' seven-game losing streak.

"I'm not here to say how this happened, how that happened," Cheeks said. "We're just going forward with the people we have and we're trying to win games. I think our team has been pretty good through all of this."

Team president Billy King said in an e-mail on Monday that he would not comment until a deal was done.

Iverson's relationship with Cheeks had deteriorated this season, with Iverson leaving a recent practice reportedly after a blowup with his coach. He skipped a team bowling function later that night, apologized and was fined by the organization.

Iverson demanded a trade last week and Sixers chair Ed Snider said on Friday the All-Star guard had "probably" played his last game in Philadelphia.

When the Sixers hired Cheeks in May 2005, Iverson joked he was so elated Cheeks was hired he wanted to kiss him on the mouth. The two formed a close relationship when Cheeks was an assistant coach with the Sixers.

"If you got a problem with Mo Cheeks, there must be something wrong with you," Iverson said at the time.

Cheeks said he would only look back fondly on Iverson's 10-plus seasons with the Sixers.

"I have no hard feelings about Allen, none whatsoever," Cheeks said. "He's been a phenomenal player for 11 years. There have been not many people who can stay as consistent as he has his years in the NBA."

AP

Yao: NBA's most dominant

YAO: Still wants to get better. REUTERS

WASHINGTON—SORRY SHAQ. TOO BAD, Tim Duncan. The most dominating big man in the National Basketball Association these days is a 7-foot-6 Chinese giant who puts the Ming in overwhelming.

Yao Ming has spent the past four years learning and improving against elite competition, enabling the 26-year-old center for the Houston Rockets to evolve into a formidable force that can seize command of a game almost at will.

"He's the most dominating center in the league now," Golden State Warriors coach Don Nelson said. "He can pass. He has the offense and the defense. He has the whole package."

Six weeks into his fifth NBA season, Yao is averaging 25.5 points, 9.5 rebounds, 2.1 assists and 2.0 blocked shots a game and has ignited the Rockets to a 14-6 mark, their best start in a decade and third-best in the league.

"We have got some strength. We have played together a lot better," Yao said. "I have been more aggressive."

Yao scored 38 points and grabbed 11 rebounds in a 114-109 victory Saturday at Washington, the Rockets' eighth triumph in 10 games. Yao scored 23 points in the fourth quarter after back spasms sidelined star guard Tracy McGrady.

"That's what the big fellow can do," McGrady said. "He is comfortable coming in and taking over the team. He showed that he can do it in the second half of last season and Yao has improved his game this year."

Yao was an All-Star Game starter in his first four seasons but this year he is playing longer, better and more consistent in crucial moments and making far fewer fouls than in prior years, avoiding an early seat on the bench.

"He's not getting in foul trouble like he did in the past," raved Washington playmaker Gilbert Arenas said. "It's hard because the big fellow has gotten a lot smarter. He doesn't help you stop him."

The Rockets allow the fewest points in the NBA and keep foes to a league-low shooting percentage while setting the NBA pace in grabbing defensive rebounds and ranking second in total rebounds. Much of that is because of Yao.

"Yao is playing better than ever. He's the reason we have started so good," Rockets guard Luther Head said. "Yao is being Yao and it's tough for anybody to keep up.

"We always try to go to him. Yao has got a lot more respect around the league."

Rockets coach Jeff Van Gundy, who has been fined a total of $125,000 for arguing that Yao was being called for too many fouls, has seen Yao win more respect from NBA referees.

Yao's second foul Saturday came with only four minutes to play and Van Gundy contends that Yao is unstoppable unless opponents foul him.

"He gets fouled and he's going to make his free throws. He can have bad nights but consistently he's going to score," Van Gundy said.

"Guarded legally, he's going to score." *AFP*

TV champion gets taste of the real thing

LONDON—PETER MANFREDO JR. IS ALready moving up from TV reality show boxer to a fight against the longest reigning world champion.

Now he's confident of going further by ending Joe Calzaghe's nine-year spell as WBO super-middleweight champ.

The American, who was runner-up in the first season of US reality show "The Contender," fights Calzaghe at the Millennium Arena in Cardiff on April 7. The contest has been put back from March 10 because the stadium is being used for the Six Nations rugby union championship.

Manfredo, who is 26-3, said he went onto the TV show to make more money.

"I was 21-0 as a professional and I've never been knocked down but I took the show because it was the chance of a million dollar pay-day," Manfredo said on Monday. "Boxers don't get well paid unless they are big names like Oscar De La Hoya and Joe so who wouldn't take it?

"But it was so unrealistic living with the other fighters and boxing five rounds when you are used to doing 12."

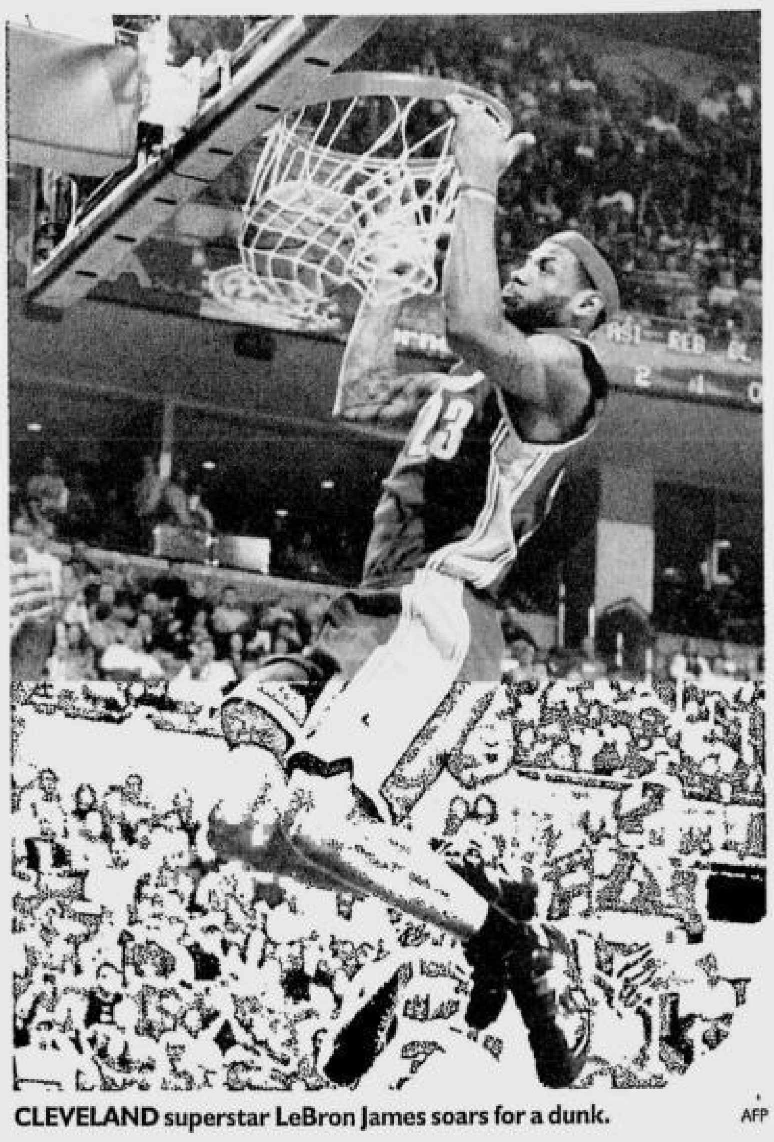
Manfredo has teamed up with respected trainer Freddie Roach for a shot at Calzaghe,. who is 42-0 and gave up the IBF title he won from Jeff Lacy in March to take the fight against the American.

"To be the best you have to beat the best, and Joe is the best in the world at super-middleweight," Manfredo said. "But I'm going in to win, that's why I took this fight. I'm like Jake La Motta in 'Raging Bull.' I'd rather die in the ring than lose."

Calzaghe, who is making his 20th defense, said he did not think the TV reality show was a true reflection of Manfredo's ability.

"I don't take much notice of 'The Contender' series," the unbeaten Welshman said. "He's a better fighter than that. He's definitely got ability and it's going to be a good fight. I've watched his last two fights and he deserves to fight for the world title. It's all about making sure I prepare and train 100 percent like I always do."

AP



CLEVELAND superstar LeBron James soars for a dunk. AFP

Tiger leads elite Target world golf field

LONDON—TIGER WOODS WRAPS up his golfing year by hosting this week's $5.75 million Target World Challenge featuring 16 top players.

The world number one leads the chase for a first prize of $1.35 million at the Jack Nicklaus-designed Sherwood Country Club in Thousand Oaks, California, starting on Thursday.

Consolation for the player finishing last comes in the form of a cheque for $170,000.

"Everyone gets a little extra spending money for Christmas," Woods told his official Web site www.tigerwoods.com.

US Open champion Geoff Ogilvy spearheads a strong international cast including holder Luke Donald, European number one Padraig Harrington, Michael Campbell, Colin Montgomerie, Paul Casey, Jose Maria Olazabal, David Howell, Henrik Stenson and Adam Scott.

David Toms and Chris DiMarco are joined by fellow Americans Fred Couples, John Daly and twice former winner Davis Love III.

"Southern California golf fans are in for a treat," said Woods. "We have got a great international field."

Donald closed with an eight-under-par 64 last year to come from six back and defeat fellow Briton Darren Clarke by two strokes.

The Target World Challenge was first held in Scottsdale, Arizona in 1999 when Tom Lehman beat fellow American David Duval by three shots.

Woods, who registered eight PGA Tour victories this year including the British Open and the U.S. PGA Championship, has a fine record in the elite event.

The 30-year-old American won the Target World Challenge in 2001 and 2004, and has been runner-up three times.

Reuters

Chinese wrestler spoils Japan sweep

DOHA, QATAR—THREE OUT OF FOUR AIN'T bad. Unless you're talking about Japan's women's wrestling team.

Once again, it was China's Wang Xu who spoiled Japan's plan to win all four gold at the Asian Games, beating defending heavyweight champion Kyoko Hamaguchi in a final that Hamaguchi, a five-time world champion, had described beforehand as her "revenge match."

The night looked good for Japan until the very last bout.

Just as coach Kazuhito Sakae had promised, sisters Kaori and Chiharu Icho breezed to golds in the 63- and 48-kilogram divisions and Saori Yoshida added a third at 55 kilograms.

Their opponents failed to score a single point.

The outcome was hardly surprising. Kaori Icho has four world titles and the Athens Olympic gold, and Chiharu is a world champion as well. Yoshida is the star of the team. She also has four world titles, won the Olympic gold in Athens and hasn't been beaten since the national championships of 2001. She's never been beaten abroad, and the win Monday was her 100th straight victory.

But then Wang took the ring.

Wang, who beat Hamaguchi to the gold medal at the Athens Olympics, was relentless, opening the scoring in the first round and constantly attacking in the second until she had sealed her victory at 3-1.

"My performance tonight was very good compared with my past ones," Wang said. "I came with confidence in myself, and the technique I used in the match was very good."

Hamaguchi, whose father, Heigo "Animal" Hamaguchi, is a famous pro wrestler in Japan, was heartbroken.

"I imagined I would win the gold and smile with the other Japanese wrestlers, but I couldn't win," she said. "I found a lot of problems that I need to overcome."

Hamaguchi, who is also something of a celebrity in Japan, said she is still hoping for revenge, however.

"I accept this result and will go forward to the Beijing Olympics," she said. "I will keep trying."

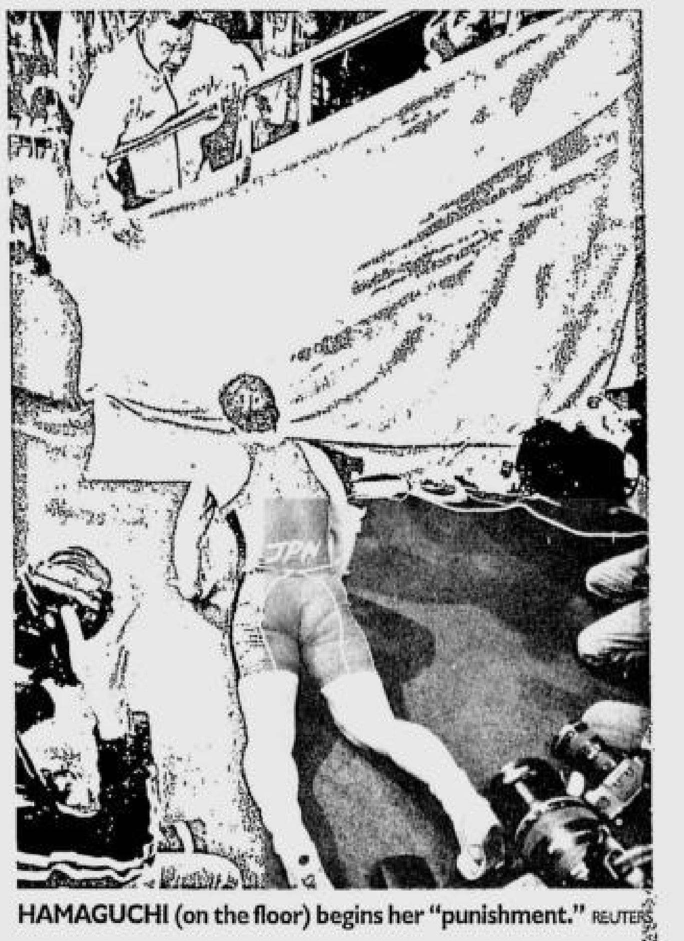
Winning the silver in the 48-kilogram class was Kim Hyung-joo of South Korea, at 55 kilograms the silver medalist was Kazakhstan's Olga Smirnova, and at 63 kilograms it was Geetica Jakhar of India.

Smirnova said she will continue to try to emulate Wang and break the Japanese stranglehold on the sport.

"There is no such thing as unbeatable," she said. *AP*

Pa's punishment: push-ups

DOHA—WHILE A TRIO OF JAPAN'S WOMEN WRESTLERS WERE LEFT TO CELEBRATE GOLD AT THE Asian Games, one was ordered to hit the floor and start doing push-ups. Kyoko Hamaguchi's reward for winning silver at the Doha spectacle on Monday night was a dressing down from her father, former wrestler Heigo Hamaguchi. In front of bemused passers-by, the 28-year-old was ordered to remove the identity pass and silver medal hanging round her neck and lie flat on the blue carpet of the arena to begin her ordeal. "I was pretty horrified," said Reuters photographer Caren Firouz who witnessed the episode. Just moments earlier the gym instructor from Tokyo had been sobbing on the podium, the unwanted medal around her neck, having been beaten by China's Wang Xu in the final of the 72kg freestyle division. Hamaguchi had been busy speaking to international press when her father called her aside for the impromptu gym session. ***Reuters***


HAMAGUCHI (on the floor) begins her "punishment." REUTERS

Boxer Zou hopes to put coach, foe to sleep

DOHA—CHINESE LIGHT FLYWEIGHT ZOU Shiming aims to add Asian Games gold to his world title on Wednesday with a performance which will send his coach to sleep.

The 25-year-old, who was an Olympic bronze medalist in 2004 before becoming China's first world champion in 2005, takes on Thailand naval officer Suban Pannon for the gold.

But he revealed that Olympic coach Li Qingsheng is so dedicated to his job that he endures restless nights during competition fretting about his fighter and his opponents.

"He works really hard to research my opponents," said Zou.

"Often he can't sleep and I think the best reward for him would be the gold.

"He is the person who knows me the best and I spend much more time staying with him than my parents."

Zou is one of two Chinese fighters going for gold on Wednesday.

If he takes the title, and follows it up with Olympic gold in Beijing in 2008, he intends to head to the United States and turn professsional.

To do that, he may have to knock out the Thai, who is favored in this event.

But his first priority, once these Games are finished, is to feast on a good meal.

"Right now I want to fill my stomach. This boxing contest is very long and I have to control my weight every day. I often wake up in the middle of the night because I feel really hungry which makes me a little frustrated.

"But I love boxing, so I have to cope with it."

Hu Qing is China's second representative in the finals.

The 20-year-old lightweight meets Mongolia's Munkh Uranchimeg delighted that he gave up his childhood interest in chess to take up boxing.

"They are totally different. You need to use your brain more often in chess and if I have the chance to choose again I would still choose boxing," said Hu.

The Chinese fighter was impressive in outpointing Genebert Basadre of the Philippines in the semifinals and intends to use his greater range to get past the Mongolian. *AFP*

$4-M booty for Thai champions

DOHA—THAILAND'S ASIAN GAMES medalists will get a slice of a near $4 million prize fund and an invite to a special party hosted by the country's prime minister.

Interim premier Surayud Chulanont will throw a bash for successful athletes on Dec. 18, where gold medalists will be awarded one million baht ($28,300) each.

Silver medalists in Doha will receive 500,000 baht while bronze medal winners will pick up 200,000 baht each, the kingdom's public relations department said on its Web site.

Thailand has a tradition of rewarding its Olympic and Asian Games gold medallists with large sums of cash, although a number of athletes have hit the headlines for squandering the money or quitting sport altogether.

Thailand is currently fifth in the Asian Games medals table with eight gold, 10 silver and 21 bronze medals, with a chance of four more gold medals in the boxing finals on Tuesday and Wednesday. *Reuters*

China's romp continues

Red Army athletes strike in sailing, diving, track

DOHA, QATAR—CHINA CONTINUED to mop up gold medals across a spectrum of sports on Monday as they rumble towards a record Asian Games haul.

Sailing, canoeing, diving and athletics golds were among those to fall to the world's most populous nation as well as both the men's and women's beach volleyball.

China won 150 golds at the last Asian Games in Busan, South Korea, in 2002. Its record is 183 in Beijing in 1990.

Chinese athletes picked up another 14 golds on Monday, and they top the standings with 124 from 309 on offer.

South Korea's Park Sung-hyun won the women's individual archery gold, as expected, and her nation swept four golds at the golf, leapfrogging Japan into second spot overall.

The South Koreans trail China by 80 gold medals. Their 44 is one more than third-placed Japan.

On a bitterly cold night at the Khalifa stadium Japan's Shingo Suetsugu underlined his status as Asia's fastest man over 200m by dashing to gold in 20.6 seconds.

China's Yang Yaozu was second in 20.71, while Suetsugu's compatriot Shinji Takahira just edged out Saudi Hamed Al Bishi for the bronze in 20.81.

Suetsugu was the first Asian to win a sprint medal at world championships or Olympics when he got a 200m bronze at the 2003 worlds in Paris.

"I felt the race was like a flash," Suetsugu told reporters. "I had confidence, it was good."

JAPANESE Nao Morooka floats in the air in the women's individual kata Karate final. Japan beat Vietnam for the gold medal. AFP

Another Asian record holder triumphed in the men's 800m, Kenyan-born Yusuf Saad Kamel taking gold for Bahrain in 1:45.74.

Mohammad Al Azemi won silver for Kuwait, while bronze went to Iran's Ehsan Mohajershojaei.

Bahrain's Ruqaya Al Ghasara claimed the women's 200m title in 23.19, adding gold to the bronze she won in the 100m.

Uzbekistan's Guzel Khubbieva took silver in 23.30 with Sri Lanka's Susanthika Jayasinghe clocking 23.42 for bronze as the top three from the 100m also dominated the longer sprint.

Al Ghasara, who runs in leggings with her hair and neck covered with a white head scarf emblazoned with the Nike logo, raised her arms in triumph before dropping to her knees and kissing the ground.

"Thank God for this medal, for this great achievement for the Bahraini people," she said.

"I was very well prepared for this race and I was expecting a gold medal because this event is my speciality."

Earlier on Monday a fourth weightlifter tested positive for a banned substance and was stripped of her silver medal.

Myanmar's Oo Mya Sanda, who won silver in the 75kg division, failed the test when traces of a banned muscle-building agent were found in her urine.

Oo's compatriot Than Kyi Kyi had been the first athlete to test positive for doping at the Games on Saturday. She was followed by two lifters from Uzbekistan, Elmira Ramileva and Alexander Urinov, on Sunday.

Oo's silver medal goes to South Korea's Kim Soon-hee while Indonesia's Sinta Darmariani is bumped up from fourth to bronze.

China's Cao Lei won the 75kg gold medal. *Reuters*

Doping blurs Asian Games shine

DOHA, QATAR—THE ASIAN GAMES resemble a Summer Olympics in many ways—at 10,000 about the same number of athletes, and with even more sports at 39. Unfortunately, even at doping.

The continental games for more than half the world's population was hit with its third doping announcement in as many days Monday when weightlifter No. 4 failed a doping test. This time, it was a silver medalist—Oo Mya Sanda of Myanmar—who was suspended and forced to return her medal.

At the Athens Olympics in 2004, 22 athletes tested positive for banned substances or for violating anti-doping regulations. Four years earlier, 11 athletes tested positive for drugs—the most since 12 at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics—and six athletes were stripped of medals, including three gold winners.

Officials here in Doha hope things don't get that bad. But although there are only four days left of competition, the results showing so far are only from the first five days of testing.

Stay tuned—the Olympic Council of Asia, which has made the doping announcements the past three days, has scheduled another "briefing" for Tuesday. The announcement for the briefing was handwritten on a whiteboard outside the news conference venue.

Sanda, who competed in the 75-kilogram class, tested positive for a banned metabolite of an anabolic agent. She waived her right to have her second, or B sample, analyzed, said OCA director-general Husain Al Musallam.

INDIA'S Tomar Alka finds herself pushed into the leg of the referee by China's Su Lihui in their wrestling match. AP

The bronze medalist took the silver, and Sinita Darmariani of Indonesia, who originally finished fourth, is now the owner of a bronze.

Al Musallam defended the number of positive tests so far at Doha, saying its anti-doping regime was a big improvement on previous games.

"At the (2002) Busan Asian Games, there were less than 1,000 total tests, and the number of positive doping cases was 10," he said. About 800 of a planned 1,200 doping tests have been conducted so far in Doha.

On Sunday, two Uzbekistan weightlifters tested positive for banned substances and were disqualified.

Than Kyi Kyi, a female weightlifter in the 48-kilogram class from Myanmar, tested positive for a banned diuretic and was disqualified in the first doping announcement made Saturday.

Trying to take some of the negative gloss off the day was world record holder Liu Xiang, who qualified easily for Tuesday's final of the 110-meter hurdles.

Liu won his heat in 13.74 seconds—0.86 slower than his world mark. In the faster second heat, Masato Naito of Japan was first in 13.70 and Shi Dongpeng of China second in 13.71.

Yusuf Saad Kamel made it a 1-2 for Bahrain in the men's and women's 800 meters when he took gold in the men's event. *AP*

Iraq-Iran tiff a possibility

DOHA, QATAR—ONE BIG GRUDGE MATCH IS over. But another, Iraq versus Iran, could be in the offing.

When the Asian Games soccer semifinals begin on Tuesday, South Korea will face Iraq, and host Qatar will be hoping to squeeze past defending champion Iran.

For the South Koreans, one major hurdle has already been cleared.

In a surprisingly lopsided match, South Korea defeated archrival North Korea, 3-0, on Saturday to earn their berth after conceding no goals during their preliminary games. The win brought South Korea to 6-3-1 in their head-to-head-matches against the North and was a nice comeback from a defeat the last time the two teams met, in Macau last year.

The North won that game 2-0.

"My players did exactly what they had to do," said South Korea's Dutch coach Peter Verbeek. "They played a perfect game."

Verbeek added that the next step will be into the darkness.

"We know nothing about Iraq," he said. "We didn't expect to be playing them."

The last time Iraq and South Korea played each other at the Asian Games was in Tehran in 1974. They played to a 1-1 draw.

Verbeek said there was one thing he did know—it would be a tough match.

Despite the ongoing war at home, the Iraqis are a seasoned and determined team. They made the semifinals in the 2004 Athens Olympics, one of its first major competitions back after an international isolation imposed following the first Gulf War.

They fought a hard match—with 14 yellow cards—to get into the final four here.

One man down for more than 40 minutes, they beat Uzbekistan 2-1 on Ali Alwan's diving header off a Muaad Saleem free kick. *AP*

SPORTS

PBA getting impatient over cage standoff

By Francis Ochoa

LET'S SETTLE THIS ONCE AND FOR all.

Tired of the discord that continues to leave the national basketball backbone fractured, the Philippine Basketball Association yesterday gave basketball leaders until Jan. 15 next year to decide on whether it is still needed to form a national team for the International Basketball Federation (Fiba) Asia qualifier.

The qualifiers, which will determine the Asian representatives to the Beijing 2008 Olympics, will be held July next year.

"We are not waning in our support to regain the country's lost glory in basketball particularly in this region and our chance to play in the Olympics," PBA commissioner Noli Eala said. "But the PBA cannot continue to wait for the BAP (Basketball Association of the Philippines) to adhere to the agreement forged in Tokyo among all the stakeholders of which I was a witness."

"We've changed the format and we've sacrificed a lot of revenues for the national cause so we want to know if we're doing this for a purpose or not," Eala told the INQUIRER.

The board, though, refused to speculate on the consequences of further prolonging the basketball standoff although Eala said that things do not look good if the impasse reaches past the PBA deadline.

"At worst, we might as well just pull out of the whole thing," Eala said. "But let's see first what happens by that date. Right now we just want to find out a lot of things."

Eala and the board want to know before the deadline whether there is still hope of forming the new organization agreed upon in the Tokyo pact forged by major basketball stakeholders with the Fiba.

The agreement calls for the formation of a unified basketball group that will work for the lifting of the Fiba-imposed suspension slapped on the country because of squabbling basketball officials locked in a power struggle for the sport's leadership.

"The PBA, as much as possible, would like to remain as a catalyst for the unification efforts," said Eala. "Our only agenda is that we want to be fully prepared should the suspension be lifted. Otherwise, it might be useless and damaging for the PBA to change our schedule and even our format for nothing."

GILBERT Lao of Welcoat and Dennis Espino (16) of Sta Lucia dispute ball possession in their game Sunday.

RODEL ROTONI

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Ang Bangkong May Damdaming Bayan

Dragons start uphill climb vs Beermen

NEEDING TO SWEEP THEIR elimination-round assignments, the Welcoat Dragons begin the uphill task of staying alive when they tackle the San Miguel Beermen today in the Talk 'N Text-PBA Philippine Cup at the Araneta Coliseum.

The Dragons, the tailenders with only three victories in 16 games, must again wield the upset ax over the Beermen in their 4:35 p.m. meeting and finish the preliminaries with dignity by getting even with the Alaska Aces.

But winning back-to-back games over the Beermen and the Aces is just half of what the Dragons should achieve to clinch the final seat in the wildcard phase.

With fate now out of their hands, the Dragons should also hope for a Coca-Cola defeat against Purefoods and Sta. Lucia Realty in order to steal the ninth wildcard slot from the Tigers.

"I know there's still a chance and the last two games are crucial," said Welcoat coach Leo Austria.

A victory for coach Chot Reyes and the Beermen will inch them toward an automatic semifinal berth, the same target of the Giants when they meet the Tigers later at 7:20 p.m.

Outright semifinalists the past two conferences, the Giants are seeking for a victory that could put them into a three-way tie with the Bulls and the Realtors, who share identical 10-6 records.

Seven-footer EJ Feihl will suit up for the Dragons to backstop Jay-R Reyes and Gilbert Lao, who sprained his ankle in a recent game, in the slot.

The Beermen, however, are now far from the team that took a beating from the Dragons. That's aside from the fact that Jercules Tangkay, Rob Wainwright and Jireh Ibanes are nursing injuries that could hurt the chances of the Dragons even more.

After acquiring Rommel Adducul and Lordy Tugade, the Beermen are solidly running second at 10-5 with starters Danny Seigle and Danny Ildefonso nearing the peak of their forms after recuperating from injuries.

And while the Beermen racked up their fourth straight win in Lucena City at the expense of the Tigers, the Dragons are still trying to halt a seven-game slide. *Musong R. Castillo*

STANDINGS	W	L
Ginebra	11	4
SMB	10	5
Sta. Lucia	10	6
Red Bull	10	6
Purefoods	9	6
Talk N Text	9	7
Air21	7	9
Alaska	5	10
Coca-Cola	4	12
Welcoat	3	13

GAMES TODAY
(Araneta Coliseum)
4:35 p.m.—Welcoat vs San Miguel Beer
7:20 p.m.—Coca-Cola vs Purefoods

Game 3 of MVBA Visayas, Mindanao divisions up today

CEBU CITY—THERE WILL be no tomorrow for today's losers as both the Visayas and Mindanao Divisions of the ML Kwarta Padala Mindanao Visayas Basketball Association (MVBA) Second Conference hold their respective Game Threes today in separate venues.

M. Lhuillier Kwarta Padala-Cebu City unleashed its vaunted form to thwart Cebu Landmaster-Mantawi, 83-71, and level their best-of-three Visayas Division Finals at one game each Monday at the New Cebu City Coliseum. Landmaster took Game One, 84-82, last Dec. 7. Game Three will again be held at the Cebu Coliseum starting at 6:30 p.m.

The Jewelers of Michel Lhuillier and Coach Raul Alcoseba led by as many as 19 points, 40-21, in the second canto. The best Landmaster could do was cut it to six, 43-49, at the 7:36 mark of the third. Back-to-back baskets by Enrico Llanto and two free throws by Mike Manigo with 34 ticks to play held off the final Landmaster surge and preserved the win.

Stephen Padilla topped M. Lhuillier anew with 13 points followed by Llanto and Jett Latonio with 12 apiece. Landmaster of Joe Soberano and coach Jun Tan felt the loss of leading scorer Egay Billones who was called up to the pro league after their Game One victory.

Over in the Mindanao Division, Holcim Pryce Pharma-Mis-Or of MVBA chair Oscar S. Moreno and the MP Warriors-GenSan of boxing superstar Manny Pacquiao dispute the crown at the Xavier University Gym starting at 6 p.m.

IN THIS ISSUE
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▨ Mirant sale vote of confidence–GMA /B14

BUSINESS

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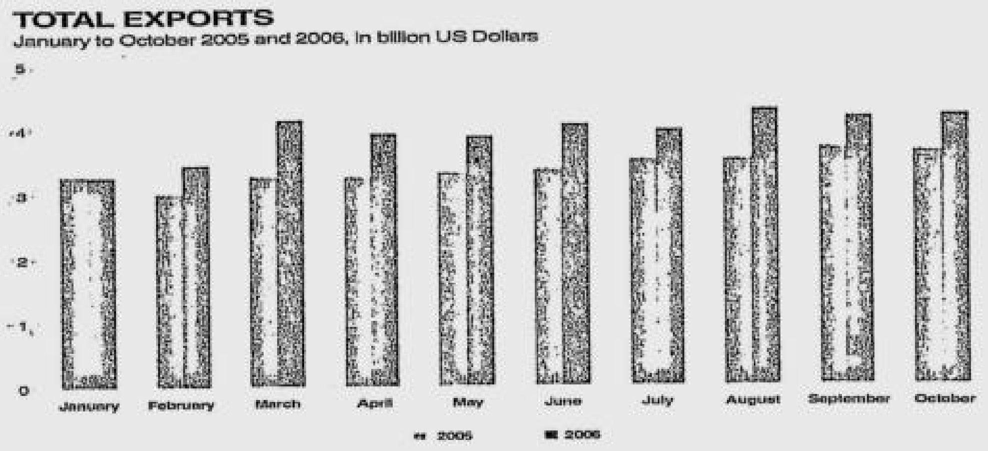
Exports surged 15.5% in October to $4.2B

TOTAL EXPORTS
January to October 2005 and 2006, in billion US Dollars



T-bond rates slump to 6.108%

HIGHLY LIQUID BANKS SWAMPED THE AUCtion for 7-year treasury bonds yesterday, forcing the rate for the long-term government securities to drop by more than 2 percentage points.

The bonds fetched an average interest rate of 6.108 percent, which was 236.5 basis points (or 2.365 percentage points) lower than the 8.473 percent recorded last August and 265 basis points lower than the 8.75 percent posted in February.

"The market is comfortable with the longer-dated instruments. Inflation is down and there is so much liquidity," National Treasurer Omar Cruz told reporters in a briefing after the auction.

The strong appetite for the bonds was attributed to the huge cash held by banks and the absence of alternative investments as attractive as the virtually risk-free government securities.

Bids for the bonds reached P25.67 billion, making the auction more than three times oversubscribed. The government planned to raise only P6 billion from yesterday's auction and the auction committee decided to accept P6 billion worth of bids to raise the borrowing program in full.

The auction yesterday was supposed to be the last for the year, but Cruz said that given the huge liquidity and demand for investment outlets, the Treasury could sell some more bonds should there be any request from the local capital market.

"(The decision to issue more bonds) is going to be a function of the market, whether or not there is going to be a request. But so far, I

T-BOND/ B4

10-month total receipts up 16.4% at $39.32B

By Michelle V. Remo

MERCHANDISE EXPORTS SURGED 15.5 PERcent in October to $4.2 billion, keeping the country poised to exceed the government's 10-percent full-year export growth forecast.

"What we had was a broad-based exports growth, given that global demand for all of the country's major exports have increased," Dennis Arroyo, director for policy and planning at the National Economic and Development Authority, told the INQUIRER.

The performance of the export sector in October brought the total for the first 10 months to $39.32 billion, up 16.4 percent from last year.

Arroyo said the export growth seen in the past month was likely to be mirrored in the last quarter of the year given the usual growth in demand during the Christmas season.

Documents from the National Statistics Office (NSO) showed that exports in October were led by the electronics sector, which accounted for $2.64 billion of total earnings for the month. This was 9.9 percent higher than a year ago.

The growth in electronics exports was attributed to the huge demand for products like cellular phones, MP3 players, iPODs and the like, Arroyo said.

He also noted the projection made by the California-based Semiconductor Industry Association that demand for electronics would continue to be robust next year. This will, in turn, offset the adverse impact of the expected slowdown in the US and Japanese economies on the Philippines' export performance.

Articles of apparel and clothing accessories were the country's second-biggest export earners for October with $231.39 million in October, or 11.4-percent higher year-on-year.

EXPORTS/ B4

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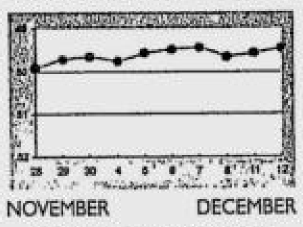


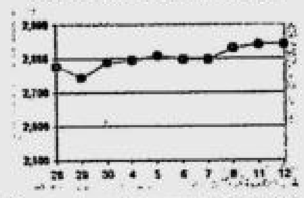
PESO-DOLLAR RATE

P 49.48 = $ 1

As of 5 p.m., Dec. 12, 2006

STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Shares close flat

SHARE PRICES CLOSED FLAT YESTERDAY as most investors stayed out of the market while awaiting the impending listing of geothermal power producer PNOC Energy Development Corp., dealers said.

Profit-taking in Manila Electric Co. (Mer-

SHARES/ B3

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East Asia Power subsidiaries file petition for rehabilitation

Hits creditor's freezing of bank funds

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

INDEPENDENT POWER PRODUCER EAST Asia Diesel Power Corp. (EADPC), a wholly owned subsidiary of publicly listed East Asia Power Resources Corp., has filed for rehabilitation with a Malabon trial court to avert what it called aggressive actions by some of its bank creditors.

EADPC has filed with the Regional Trial Court of Malabon a petition for rehabilitation together with its 40-percent owned affiliate Duracom Mobile Power Corp. (Duracom).

Both EADPC and Duracom supply about 2 percent of the electricity requirements of Manila Electric Co., the country's biggest power distributor.

"The filing of the petition for rehabilitation was prompted by the recent aggressive and precipitous actions taken by some of its financial creditors which included the seizure of all of its cash deposits," East Asia Power controller Jaime Robles Jr. wrote in a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange.

Robles said EADPC's management saw the need for it and Duracom to undergo rehabilitation to enable it to resume its power supply services and protect the interest of its stakeholders, employees and the general public.

"Subject to approval of the rehabilitation plan, it is hoped that both companies will (resume) full operations in the near future," Robles said.

EADPC owns two power barges in Navotas with a total capacity of 109 megawatts. Duracom, a 40-percent owned firm of EADPC, owns and operates two power barges also located in Navotas that can supply 133 megawatts of electricity.

Operation of the power barges have been temporarily suspended since July. Management declined to comment further on the reason for the suspension.

Last Oct. 9, Duracom received a notice of default from Philippine National Bank, on behalf of a majority of lenders. PNB cited Duracom's alleged failure to remit payment on the minimum quarterly interest of P7.5 million due last Sept. 30.

As of Nov. 10, Duracom's oustanding debts stood at P4.8 billion consisting of P4.06 billion in principal and accrued interest of P750.9 million.

EADPC also received last Oct. 13 a notice of default from PNB, which cited its failure to pay P7.5 million in minimum interest due last September.

EADPC has outstanding debts of P880.3 million.

The notices of default were served despite a letter from EADPC and Duracom dated Oct. 6 assuring the lenders of the entry of an investor.

EADPC and Duracom told its lenders that the Avenue Capital Group bought 92.6 percent of EADPC and 37 percent of Duracom and will be presenting its proposed management plans to address the two firms' loan obligations.

The East Asia Power Group claimed that last Oct. 27 and without notice or communication from PNB, all the bank accounts of EADPC worth at least P193 million and Duracom worth at least P183.4 million with PNB's Ortigas Branch were frozen and seized by PNB.

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December 13, 2006
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Online broker eyes ₱200-M loan

ONLINE BROKER Citiseconline.Com Inc. plans to secure P200 million in loans from a local commercial bank to fund a new credit facility for clients to allow them to maximize investment opportunities in the stock market.

CitisecOnline president Conrado F. Bate said the online brokerage firm plans to launch by January what it calls a "margin line facility" to clients that is similar to a credit facility.

This innovation will be the first to be offered by an online brokerage firm.

Customers with total equity (cash and stocks) of at least P200,000 can avail themselves of this facility.

A client can double his buying power by tapping this margin line facility, which is equivalent to the same amount in his portfolio.

Eligible stocks for this facility would be blue chips and highly traded issues such as stocks in the PSEi.

"This facility will give our customers the ability to take advantage of any investment opportunity in the market, thereby increasing their earnings potential. It will also boost our revenues primarily through interest income," Bate said.

CitisecOnline is targeting 1,000 clients this year and aims to triple this number to 3,000 next year.

CitisecOnline went public in July, raising P149.6 million from its maiden offering of 110 million shares at P1.36 apiece. *Elizabeth L. Sanchez*

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of December 12, 2006)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
FINANCIAL					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	7.3	7.3	7.3	7.3	15,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	44	44.5	43	44.5	913,300
Bank of the Phil. Islands	62.5	63.5	62.5	63	3,363,700
China Banking Corp.	700	705	700	705	930
Citystate Savings Bank	19	19	19	19	600
Export and Ind. Bank A	0.47	0.49	0.47	0.48	3,010,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	79	80	79	80	69,200
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	51	51.5	50.5	51	1,325,100
Philippine National Bank	41.5	42	41.5	42	3,600
Phil. Savings Bank	47.5	48	47.5	48	3,000
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	26	26	26	26	117,200
Security Bank Corp.	63	65.5	63	65.5	42,400
Union Bank of the Phil.	50	50	49.5	50	13,000
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
Citiseconline.Com Inc.	4.85	5.3	4.8	5.2	1,581,000
First Metro Invest. Corp.	30.5	30.5	30.5	30.5	2,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	1620	1640	1620	1640	200
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.34	1.34	1.34	1.34	216,000
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2120	2130	2120	2130	1,240
Ivantage Corp.	1.46	1.5	1.46	1.5	613,000
INDUSTRIAL					
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
First Gen Corp.	53.5	56.5	53.5	56	1,871,900
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	60	60	57	58.5	2,198,900
Manila Electric Co. A	52	52.5	48.5	51.5	2,294,500
Manila Electric Co. B	55.5	56	51.5	53.5	2,544,300
Manila Water Co. Inc.	9.9	10.25	9.6	9.7	2,864,000
Petron Corp.	4.05	4.1	4.05	4.05	3,888,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.25	0.28	0.25	0.27	2,590,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.02	1.04	1.02	1.04	419,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	21.25	21.5	21.25	21.5	20,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	41	41	41	41	137,000
Pancake House Inc.	6	6	6	6	1,000
RFM Corp.	1.04	1.04	1.04	1.04	170,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	2.6	2.6	2.55	2.55	360,000
San Miguel Corp. A	65.5	66	65.5	66	38,800
San Miguel Corp. B	71.5	71.5	70.5	71	330,200
Alliance Tuna Int'l. Inc.	2.02	2.06	2.02	2.04	770,000
Universal Robina Corp.	19.5	19.5	19.5	19.5	204,400
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	1.16	1.18	1.14	1.18	15,120,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	3.25	3.25	3.2	3.2	2,027,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	2.7	3	2.7	3	350,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	7.5	7.7	7.5	7.6	3,330,000
Republic Cement Corp.	4.05	4.1	4.05	4.05	3,164,000
CHEMICALS					
Chemrez Technologies Inc.	4.95	4.95	4.75	4.8	12,306,000
Interphil Labs Inc. A	0.82	0.82	0.82	0.82	10,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Geograce Res. Phil. Inc.	0.73	0.73	0.7	0.71	38,510,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.175	0.185	0.175	0.18	4,270,000
Panasonic Mfg Phil Corp.	6.4	6.4	6.4	6.4	7,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	27,000,000
Ayala Corp.	490	495	490	490	201,590
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.61	0.63	0.61	0.61	1,270,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	6.2	6.3	6.2	6.3	1,916,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	32,300,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.85	2.85	2.75	2.85	2,223,000
APC Group Inc.	0.33	0.39	0.33	0.36	46,170,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0095	0.0095	0.0095	0.0095	52,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.94	0.98	0.93	0.93	3,530,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.	3	3	3	3	21,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	1.12	1.12	1.12	1.12	100,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	8.6	8.6	8.5	8.5	8,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	2.26	2.26	2.1	2.14	26,324,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	6.1	6.3	6.1	6.2	3,825,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	3.55	3.6	3.55	3.6	278,000
House of Investments Inc.	1.94	1.96	1.94	1.94	1,698,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	9.2	9.2	9	9.1	343,000
Keppel Holdings	1.5	1.5	1.3	1.3	22,000
Keppel Holdings B	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	20,000
Medco Holdings	0.24	0.24	0.24	0.24	100,000
Magnum Holdings Inc.	4.4	4.4	4.25	4.35	363,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	1.66	1.66	1.6	1.62	499,000
Pacifica	0.02	0.02	0.019	0.019	18,900,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.64	0.64	0.64	0.64	440,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.155	0.16	0.15	0.15	15,260,000
SM Investments Corp.	297.5	300	295	300	718,530
South China Resources Inc.	0.96	0.96	0.93	0.96	400,000
Seafront Resources Corp.	1.64	1.64	1.62	1.62	360,000
Unioil Res. & Holdings Co	0.18	0.185	0.18	0.185	5,520,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	14.75	14.75	14.5	14.75	9,467,300
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.49	0.49	0.49	0.49	30,000
Belle Corp.	1.14	1.18	1.12	1.12	15,427,000
A Brown Company Inc.	1.72	1.72	1.64	1.66	1,134,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.39	0.39	0.39	0.39	680,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	3.2	3.35	3.2	3.35	142,000
Cebu Prop. Vent B	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	2,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	60,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.54	0.56	0.53	0.56	42,830,000
Edsa Prop. Holdings Inc.	1.6	1.62	1.6	1.6	591,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	2,300,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.82	1.86	1.82	1.86	50,653,000
Keppel Phils. Prop. Inc.	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	224,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.49	0.52	0.46	0.51	9,220,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67	30,000
Megaworld Corp.	2.18	2.34	2.18	2.32	67,922,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	100,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	16.25	16.75	16.25	16.5	4,200,700
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.64	0.67	0.63	0.66	58,550,000
SM Development Corp.	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4	206,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	9.9	10	9.9	10	20,497,000
Suntrust Home Dev. Inc.	0.57	0.59	0.57	0.59	170,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	1,200,000
SERVICE					
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	20	20.25	20	20.25	36,200
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	1	1	1	1	100,000
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.66	1.66	1.64	1.66	5,342,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	1250	1255	1245	1250	71,620
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	5.8	5.8	5.7	5.7	2,957,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	2450	2450	2440	2445	83,180
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.18	0.19	0.18	0.18	7,680,000
Imperial Res.	0.017	0.017	0.017	0.017	2,800,000
Ionics Inc.	2.02	2.06	2.02	2.06	176,000
IPVG Corp.	4.1	4.3	4	4.15	18,257,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.0575	0.0575	0.0575	0.0575	1,200,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.055	0.0575	0.055	0.0575	8,700,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	2,000
Transpacific Broadband	5.3	5.7	5	5.4	1,199,000
Philweb Corp.	0.031	0.031	0.031	0.031	76,200,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	4	4.15	4	4.15	471,000
Aboitiz Trans. Sys. Corp.	1.2	1.24	1.2	1.24	121,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	19	19	19	19	222,400
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.95	0.95	0.94	0.94	60,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.3	1.3	1.18	1.18	20,000
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	2.18	2.18	2.14	2.14	1,460,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	500,000
EDUCATION					
Centro Escolar University	9	9	8.7	8.8	32,000
iPeople Inc.	3.1	3.2	3.1	3.1	169,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Macroasia Corp.	2.14	2.14	2.12	2.14	66,000
Paxys Inc.	17.75	18	17.75	18	272,100
Prime Gaming Phils. Inc.	30	40	30	40	996,900
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	6	6.2	6	6.1	1,081,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	6.3	6.4	6.3	6.3	296,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	68,800,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	8.4	8.8	8.3	8.7	5,185,000
Benguet Corp. A	9.1	9.1	9.1	9.1	1,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	2.02	2.02	1.96	1.96	120,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	2,950,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co. B	0.26	0.27	0.26	0.27	3,400,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.02	0.021	0.02	0.021	196,600,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.023	0.024	0.023	0.024	57,200,000
Omico Corp.	0.011	0.011	0.01	0.011	3,000,000
Philex Mining Corp.	4.15	4.15	4.15	4.15	3,451,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	19.5	19.5	19	19	257,300
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.65	0.75	0.65	0.66	16,690,000
Vulcan Ind'l	1.3	1.36	1.2	1.26	18,908,000
OIL					
Basic Petroleum Corp.	0.26	0.29	0.26	0.28	10,030,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.01	0.011	0.01	0.011	21,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	27,100,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	1.02	1.02	1	1	118,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	10	10.25	10	10	17,000

CURRENCIES

December 12, 2006 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.755287	1.000000	49.6590
Japan	Yen	0.006458	0.008550	0.4246
United Kingdom	Pound	1.478172	1.957100	97.1876
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.097169	0.128652	6.3887
Switzerland	Franc	0.627940	0.831393	41.2861
Canada	Dollar	0.658145	0.871384	43.2724
Singapore	Dollar	0.489651	0.648298	32.1938
Australia	Dollar	0.592428	0.784375	38.9518
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.003573	2.652731	131.7320
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.201555	0.266859	13.2520
Brunei	Dollar	0.488069	0.646204	32.0898
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000083	0.000110	0.0055
Thailand	Baht	0.021239	0.028121	1.3965
UAE	Dirham	0.205744	0.272405	13.5274
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.324000	65.7485
Korea	Won	0.000816	0.001080	0.0536
China	Yuan**	0.096399	0.127632	6.3381
Argentina	Peso	0.246625	0.326531	16.2152
Brazil	Real	0.353350	0.467836	23.2323
Denmark	Kroner	0.134154	0.177620	8.8204
India	Rupee	0.016900	0.022376	1.1112
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.212427	0.281254	13.9668
Mexico	New Peso	0.069650	0.092217	4.5794
New Zealand	Dollar	0.519633	0.687994	34.1651
Norway	Kroner	0.122909	0.162731	8.0811
Pakistan	Rupee	0.012404	0.016423	0.8155
South Africa	Rand	0.107438	0.142248	7.0639
Sweden	Kroner	0.110333	0.146081	7.2542
Syria	Pound	0.014550	0.019264	0.9566
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023298	0.030847	1.5318
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000352	0.000466	0.0231

Source: Reuters' forex closing prices as of NY Time—Dec. 11, 2006
* Various banks in Bahrain as quoted in Reuters' Screen
** Asian Time Closing Rate as of Dec. 11, 2006

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

FOR VIC AGUSTIN'S rude, boorish behavior at a press conference last Saturday, a three-person committee yesterday suspended the publication of his column, "Cocktales," for one month beginning today. The committee reprimanded Agustin for conduct unbecoming of a representative of the INQUIRER.—**The Publisher**

RP seen getting $1.48B in ODAs this year

By Michelle V. Remo

THE GOVERNMENT is expected to exceed its official development assistance (ODA) borrowing program for the year as foreign lenders were encouraged to increase credit to the Philippines by an improving credit image.

The Department of Finance said total borrowings in the form of ODA were expected to reach $1.48 billion this year, or $585 million more than its ODA borrowing program of only $900 million.

Finance Undersecretary Roberto Tan told reporters that the amount of actual ODA inflow and commitments received this year was unusually high. He said this reflected the improving confidence of creditors in the country's ability to service its obligations.

"This year is going to be a banner year in terms of ODA commitments and disbursements. We are definitely going to exceed the program," Tan said.

Tan said $100 million was disbursed by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for health sector reform programs and $85 million by the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) for the Marikina flood control project.

He added that ODA loans from various foreign creditors for several projects, such as for infrastructure and social services development, were estimated to amount to as much as $400 million.

Aside from the World Bank, the ADB and JBIC, other sources of foreign credit are the governments of Germany, Australia, Spain and other European countries.

Shares …

From page B1

alco), following a rally in the past three sessions, was offset by buying interest in other stocks like property developer Megaworld Corp., they added.

The composite index slipped 0.95 points at 2,840.82 after moving between 2,823.91 and 2,843.30.

Decliners narrowly beat gainers 51 to 48, while 50 stocks ended unchanged.

Volume traded was 1.23 billion shares worth P2.88 billion. *AFP*

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WARRANTY

PSALM secures supply deal for Magat hydro plant

Successful bidding seen on Thursday

By Abigail L. Ho

THE POWER SECTOR ASSETS and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM) has secured a power supply contract of 95 megawatts (MW) for the 360-MW Magat hydropower plant that it will be bidding out on Thursday.

Apart from the supply contract, PSALM said the government agency has likewise signed the commercial terms and conditions for the lease of National Irrigation Administration-owned lands occupied by part of the plant.

"We have threshed out and finalized the service fee for the operations and maintenance (O&M) agreement and the rentals for the lease contract of the NIA lands. The O&M agreement will be binding between PSALM and NIA," PSALM vice president for asset management and electricity trading Froilan Tampinco said.

"PSALM has already released to bidders a supplemental bid bulletin, which contains the final execution copies of the O&M agreement and the lease contract. These documents will have to be signed by the bidders and submitted to PSALM on the bidding date," he added.

The O&M agreement details the terms and conditions for the operation and maintenance of the dams and other non-power components needed for the operation of the Magat power complex.

PSALM released last Nov. 30 the final bid documents for the plant. These included the final version of the asset purchase agreement and land lease agreement.

Under the asset purchase agreement, the winning bidder will have to remit a 40-percent down payment on or before the closing date.

The balance can then be amortized in 14 equal semi-annual payments with an interest of 12 percent a year compounded semi-annually.

The winning bidder should also post a performance bond equivalent to 2 percent of the purchase price. This bond will be reduced every year equivalent to 2 percent of the total amount of the deferred payments.

Apart from the down payment and the performance bond, the winning bidder is also required to post a deferred payment security deposit equivalent to at least the next deferred payment in the form of cash, currently dated manager's check or an irrevocable standby letter of credit acceptable to PSALM.

On the Nov. 14 deadline, five investor groups submitted the required documents to be able to bid for the Magat plant, which currently had the biggest generating capacity among all operating hydropower facilities in the country.

Four of these had complied with the documentary requirements for the plant.

Among the investors that had earlier expressed interest in the National Power Corp. asset are First Gen Corp., Aboitiz Equity Ventures and Korea Electric Power Corp.

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Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

The Philippine Health Insurance Corporation, **PhilHealth Regional Office XI - Davao** (PROXI-Davao) wishes to invite supplier to apply for eligibility and to bid for the Procurement of Twenty three units Desktop Computers with UPS and Eight units Network Laserjet Printers (see attached project specifications).

The Government of the Philippines, through PhilHealth had provided funds for which this invitation is issued. The Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) of the following lots to be bid are:

LOT	IT EQUIPMENTS	QUANTITY (Units)	UNIT PRICE (Pesos)	ABC (Pesos)
Lot 1	Desktop Computers with UPS	23	60,000.00	1,380,000.00
Lot 2	Network Printer (Laserjet)	8	95,000.00	760,000.00

All interested parties are invited for the **Pre-Bid Conference** at the PhilHealth Regional Office XI-Davao Conference Room, Reyes Building, Quimpo Blvd., Matina, Davao City on **December 20, 2006 at 9:00 a.m.**

The bid documents shall be available at the General Services Section, Administration Division through Mr. Patrick Angelo L. Uy, Chairperson, PRO XI BAC Secretariat, starting **December 6, 2006 to January 8, 2007, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.** upon payment of non-refundable fee of:

LOT	IT EQUIPMENTS	FEE (Pesos)
Lot 1	Desktop Computers with UPS	2,760.00
Lot 2	Network Printers (Laserjet)	1,520.00

The bidders shall drop their duly accomplished bid documents (1) eligibility requirements, (2) technical proposal, and (3) financial proposal in three separate sealed envelopes in the bid boxes located at the **Administration Division, PhilHealth Regional Office XI - Davao, Reyes Bldg., Quimpo Boulevard, Matina, Davao City**. Deadline for submission and receipt of bids shall be on **January 10, 2007 at 11:00 a.m.** The official time clock shall be the bundy clock located at the ground floor. Any bid submitted after the cut-off time will not be accepted. **Opening of bids will follow at 1:00 p.m.** at the same venue. Any bidder who comes late will not be entertained.

The BAC shall determine if each prospective bidder is eligible to participate in the bidding by examining the completeness of each prospective bidder's eligibility requirements or statements against a checklist of requirements, using the **non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria.**

The Bid Security shall be in an amount at least equal to, and not lower than a percentage of the approved budget for the contract in the following forms:

LOT 1 : PROCUREMENT OF 23 UNITS DESKTOP COMPUTERS WITH UPS

Forms of Security	Minimum Amount in % of Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid	Amount of Bid Security
Cash, certified check, cashier's check, manager's check, bank draft or irrevocable letter of credit	One percent (1%)	PhP 13,800.00
Bank Guarantee	One & a half percent (1 ½%)	PhP 20,700.00

LOT 2 : PROCUREMENT OF 8 UNITS NETWORK PRINTERS (LASERJET)

Forms of Security	Minimum Amount in % of Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid	Amount of Bid Security
Cash, certified check, cashier's check, manager's check, bank draft or irrevocable letter of credit	One percent (1%)	PhP 7,600.00
Bank Guarantee	One & a half percent (1 ½%)	PhP 11,400.00

PhilHealth Regional Office XI Bids and Awards Committee (PRO XI BAC) reserves the right to waive any formality in the responses to the eligibility requirements and to this invitation. PRO XI BAC further reserves the right to reject any and all proposals, or declare a failure of bidding, or not award the contract, and makes no assurance that a contract shall be entered as a result of this invitation.

For more information, please call the BAC Secretariat at telephone nos.: (082) 296-2265, (082) 299-2075 and (082) 299-3731.

We look forward to your participation in this worthwhile endeavor.

(Sgd.) **RAUL M. ODUCAYEN**
Chairperson, PRO XI-Davao, BAC

(PDI--Dec. 6 & 13, 2006)

Energy agency sets own probe of power price manipulation

THE ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION has formed a unit that will conduct its own probe of alleged price manipulation activities at the wholesale electricity spot market (WESM).

In a briefing yesterday, ERC Chair Rodolfo Albano Jr. said the verification and investigation process has started and that results of the probe should be released by the end of January.

"The ERC will urgently attend to this controversy," he said. "Rest assured that the ERC will strictly follow its mandate of monitoring and preventing market power abuse and anticompetitive behavior equally, to guarantee the success of a restructured electricity industry."

Under Section 46 of RA 9136 or the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001 (Epira), anticompetitive behavior and any violation of the Epira and its implementing rules and regulations were subject to fines ranging from P50,000 to P50 million.

Apart from the fines, Albano said the ERC could also impose price control measures on the electricity bourse, if necessary.

While the ERC's own investigation was ongoing, he said the tripartite committee composed of the regulatory body, the Department of Energy and WESM operator Philippine Electricity Market Corp. would convene immediately "to discuss additional safeguards to avert price or market manipulation."

PEMC's market surveillance committee recently found the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM) guilty of using its market power to influence prices at the WESM.

PSALM has four teams trading in the spot market. It handles capacity from independent power producers with existing contracts with National Power Corp. Through these four teams, PSALM handles half of all volume traded at the market.

According to the MSC report, while three of PSALM's trading teams—those handling capacity from the 700-megawatt (MW) Pagbilao, 1,200-MW Sual and 1,200-MW Ilijan plants—said they were acting independently of each other, they made the same price offers of P10,000 per MW-hour (or P10 per kilowatt-hour) in the 10-11 a.m. trading period last Aug. 30.

"PSALM, acting as one through its three trading teams, exercised market power. They were able to set the market price to a level that they wanted during peak hours," the report stated.

Albano said the ERC received a copy of the MSC report on Nov. 24, prompting the establishment of the regulatory body's investigating unit.

Abigail L. Ho

Exports surged 15.5% . . .

From page B1

Cathodes and sections of cathodes of refined copper followed with receipts of $130.3 million, up 322.2 percent from a year ago.

Other top exports for October were woodcraft and furniture, $87.32 million; ignition and other wiring sets, $78.36 million; petroleum, $59.96 million; coconut oil, $47.26 million; metal components, $40.35 million, and bananas, $31.78 million.

The Philippines' biggest export market was the United States, which accounted for $793.46 million of total receipts for October. Japan followed with $669.71 million.

Other top export destinations for the month were China, $468.78 million; the Netherlands, $383.3 million; Hong Kong, $378.93 million; Singapore, $284.87 million; Malaysia, $204.99 million; Germany, $171.55 million; Taiwan, $168.19 million, and the Republic of Korea, $121.41 million.

T-bond rates slump to 6.108%

From page B1

haven't received any yet," Cruz said.

The treasurer said that the government could still borrow around P6 billion more from the domestic capital market without breaching its borrowing program for the year.

He said the weak demand for the recently offered retail treasury bonds (RTBs) gave the government more room to borrow. The government was hoping to sell P20 billion worth of RTBs but actual sales reached only P8.3 billion.

RTBs, unlike regular bonds, are designed for small or individual investors as the minimum investment required is only P5,000.

The weak appetite for the RTBs was blamed on the low interest rate fetched by the government securities of 5.875 percent.

Michelle V. Remo

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
TV GUIDE
Wednesday, December 13, 2006

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Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABC 5	Nickelodeon				PBA				Big News	PBA				Philippine Idol	Sentro	Frontlines		Anay-Anay Premyo Sa Risibo	Letty La Mas Fea
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema				Inocente De Ti	Yu-Gi-Oh GX	Beet The Vandel Buster	Pangako Sa 'Yo	TV Patrol World		Kapamilya Deal Or No Deal	Super Inggo (8:15 PM)		Maging Sino Ka Man	Pinoy Dream Academy		Bandila	Probe	Mirada De Mujer
AXN		Las Vegas (Season 2)		The Shield 4		The Amazing Race Asia		Ripley's Believe It or Not		The 4400		Ultimate Guinness World Records	Samsung Sports World	World's Most Amazing Videos		CSI: Miami (Season 4)		CSI: Crime Scene Investigation (Season 6)	
bTV	NBA Jam Local	TV Shopping		EUROLeague Kaunas vs. Moscow				NBA: Nuggets @ Hawks					NBA Live	NBA Fantasy Hoops	NBA: Kings @ Warriors				
Cartoon Network																	Aqua Teen Hunger Force		
Cinema One		Batas Sa Aking Kamay				Dahas				Markova: Comfort Gay			Persona	Aishite Imasu (9:15 PM)				Singles	
Cinemax			Komodo Vs. Cobra			Cape Fear (5:05 PM)				Critters				The Stars Fell On Henrietta				Scam	
CNN		Business International		World News	World Sport	Larry King Live		Business International	World Sport	World News Asia		World News	World Sport	World News Asia	World News Asia	Your World Today			
Crime/Suspense		Bones		Law and Order: Special Victims Unit + 24		Profiler		City Confidential		Law and Order		Law and Order: Special Victims Unit + 24		Pelican Brief				Law Firm + Revelations	
Discovery Channel	Mean Machines	Perfect Disaster		American Chopper		Hyperspace with Sam Neil Destiny		Man Made Marvels		Wild Discovery		Hour China		Unsolved History		A Haunting		Blueprint For Disaster	
Disney Channel	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	Totally Spies	An Attack/Un-[illegible] Bunny	Mickey Mouseworks	Lilo & Stitch	Emperor's New School	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	That's So Raven	Wonderful World Of Disney			American Dragon	Kim Possible	Buzz On Maggie	Totally Spies	Wonderful World Of Disney	
ESPN		Champions League Extra				Women's Pro Billiards 06		English Premier Football League				Manchester United Premier Cup 06 - Highlights		Sportscenter Asia	NBA Fastbreak	Motorsport Asia	Classic Boxing: Lamotta vs Cerdan		Sportscenter Asia
ETC		America's Next Top Model 5		Change of Heart	Elimidate	Blind Date	Fifth Wheel	Seinfeld	Ambush Makeover	The Tyra Banks Show		Veronica Mars Season 2		Beauty And The Geek		Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	The Tonight Show With Jay Leno	
ETC 2nd Avenue		Starting Over		The Maury Povich Show		The Jerry Springer Show		Dr. Phil		NBC Nightly News	The Inside Edition	The Ellen (Degeneres) Show		Wheel Of Fortune	Jeopardy	Cold Turkey 1		NBC Nightly News	The Inside Edition
Fox News		Hannity & Colmes		On The Record With Greta Van Susteren		The O'Reilly Factor		Your World With Neil Cavuto		Fox & Friends						Fox News Live			
GMA 7	Makita Ka Lang Muli	Now and Forever	Into The Sun		Dragonball Z	Ghost Fighter	Jewel In The Palace		24 Oras	Captain Barbell	Atlantika (7:45 PM)		Bakekang	A Rosy Life (9:15 PM)		Nuts Entertainment			Saksi
Hallmark Channel				Judging Amy		Just Cause		McLeod's Daughters		Strong Medicine		Family Law		Judging Amy					
HBO	Dolores Claiborne				Lorenzo's Oil (4:45 PM)					The Enemy Within				Without A Paddle				Mr. Jones	
Hero TV	Wild Cats	Sunny Pig	Inuyasha III	Mirmo de Pon	Saiyuki Reload	Naruto	Monkey Turn	Gundam Seed Destiny	Full Metal Panic	Galaxy Angels	Voltes V Evolution	Inuyasha III	Mirmo de Pon	Astroboy	Three-Eyed One	Naruto	Gosaurer	Wild Cats	Yu-Gi-Oh GX
IBC 13		EZ Shop				Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	New Life Shopping Network		EBC Earth Files		Japan Video Topics/ Arris		Travel Philippines	Good Take	Up Close & Personal	IBC News Tonite		
JackTV		Raw				Cheat	Fitcer	Afterburn		Mad TV		That 70s Show	Arrested Development	Last Comic Standing		The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	Chappelle's Show	The Late Show David Letterman	
Lifestyle Network		30 Minute Meals	Sweet Dreams	Rachel Ray		Smart Solutions	DIY: Crafts	Food Network Special		Martha		Style Star	Fashion Police	Rachel Ray		Isaac		Fine Living Special	
MTV Philippines		MTV Screen	VH1 Presents: Heavy - D' Story of Metal pt1		Yo Momma	Score	MTV Hits			Get Spotted	MTV Screen	TRL		Yo Momma	Score	My Super Sweet 16	Homecoming	VH1 Presents: Heavy - D' Story of Metal pt2	
MYX		Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Take 5	MYXlog	MYX Firsts	Star MYX	OPM MYX	Pop MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		MYX Live!		D'yan Banda	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	MYXlog
National Geographic		Nat'l Geographic Specials		Is It Real S2		Planet Wild S3	Amazing Moments	Top 5		Nat'l Geographic Specials		WOW!		Seconds From Disaster		Is It Real S2		Outbreak Investigation	
NBN					Diyos Ko, Mahal Mo Ba Sila?	Teleradyo W/ Rey Langit & Angelique Lazo		4th Cycling Search	The Final Say...ChaCha			Teleradyo Final Edition		World Pool Championship					
Net 25	INC Chronicles (Filipino)	In Focus	Euromaxx	INC Chronicles (English)	INC Chronicles (Filipino)	Ang Pagbubuyag		News Beat (Live)		OpenLine Live	Kapatid Sa Hanapbuhay	INC Chronicles (English)	INC Chronicles (Filipino)	Ang Tamang Daan		World Report	In Focus	DWTV Journal News	Euromaxx
Nickelodeon	Chalkzone	The Fairly Odd Parents	SpongeBob SquarePants	Naturally Sadie	Romeo	SpongeBob SquarePants	My Life As A Teenage Robot	Danny Phantom	The Adventures Jimmy Neutron	The Fairly Odd Parents	Drake & Josh	Unfabulous	SpongeBob SquarePants	The Fairly Odd Parents	All That	Romeo	As Told By Ginger	My Dad The Rock Star	
PBO			Smith & Wesson				Ambon Sa Pisngi Ng Dagat				Sugo				Ang Probinsyano				Co-Ed Scandal
Qtv	Pawnshop No. 8	Samurai X	Hikaru No Go	The Prince Of Tennis	MMS (My Music Station)		Moms		Winter Sonata	Irene	Emperor Of The Sea	Takeshi's Castle	Now Na!		News On Q	Balikbayan		Irene	Women Of Worth
RPN 9	TV Shopping	Real Lives, Real People		Roundtable Discussion	Mr. Fighting	RPN Aksyon Balita		Complete Savages	Jake In Progress	Iron Chef		Summerland		Extreme Makeover: Home Edition		Newswatch Now	Cargo For Truth		Kerygma
SBN 21								Sony Music Video				Oras Ng Himala		Oras ng Katotohanan		Sony Music Video		Sony Music Video	
Solar Sports										Sagupaan	Bikini Destination	ECW		Undisputed		Sportsdesk		NFL Game	
Star Movies		Submerged (3:15 PM)				Renaissance Man				Edison (7:15 PM)				Lord Of War				Marked For Death (11:05PM)	
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		General Hospital		Desire Table For Three		The Simpsons	Malcolm In The Middle	Star News Asia	Seinfeld	Ed		Grey's Anatomy		Desire Table For Three		Seinfeld	Ed
Studio 23		Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Take 5	MYXlog	Blog	Pinoy Dream Academy	Wazzup Wazzup	CSI	Las Vegas (8:15 PM)		It's A Guy Thing		News Central	Oprah (10:45PM)		MYXlog
UnTV				KNC Show	Kakampi Mo Ang Batas		Kaka at Clare Kasagpay Nyo		Public Hearing	Make My Day		Ang Dating Daan (8:15 PM)							

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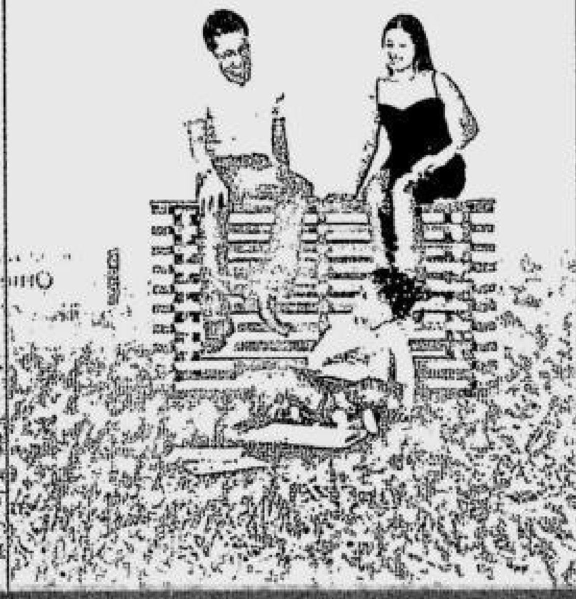

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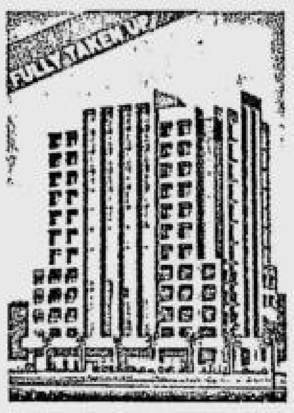

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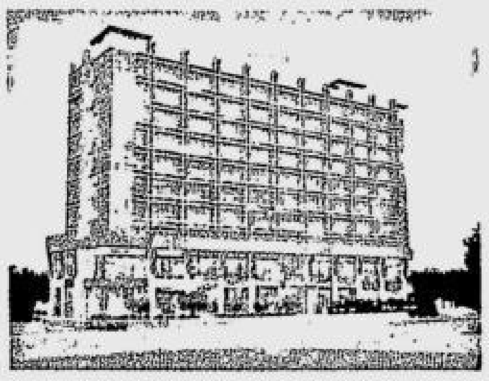

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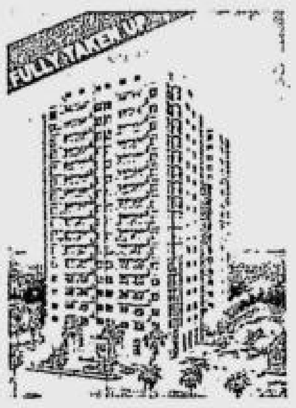

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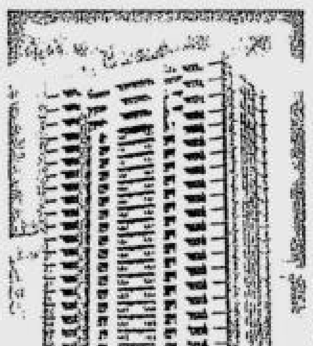

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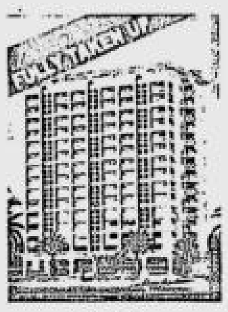

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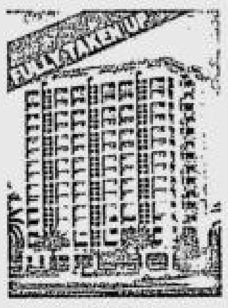

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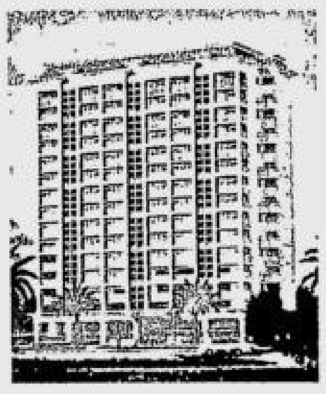

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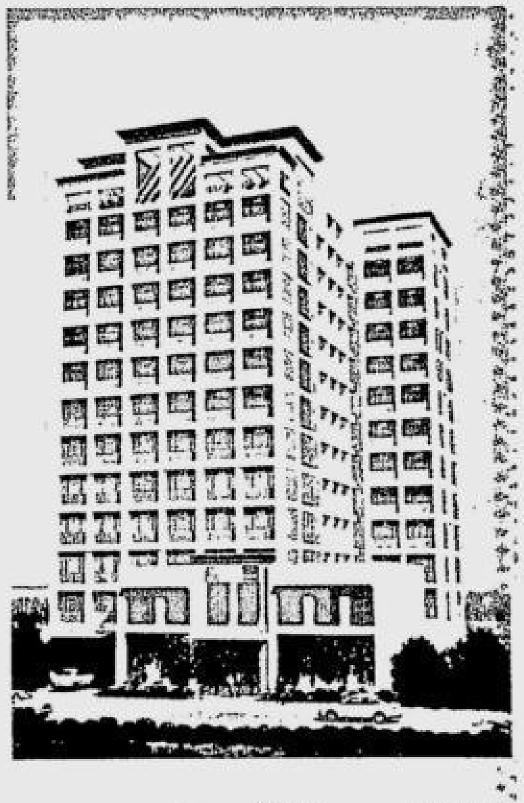

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3 new international airlines to start flights via Clark airport

By Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE—Three international airlines will start flights at the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport here to major destinations in Southeast Asia and the Middle East, Victor said Jose Luciano, Clark International Airport Corp. president.

Hong Kong Airways, which started its four weekly flights here on Dec. 10, has dedicated some of its Boeing 737 planes, with seating capacity of 145, to its DMIA operations, Luciano said.

Tair of Saudi Arabia will serve the Riyadh-Jeddah-Clark route beginning in the second week of January 2007.

Its Boeing 747 planes, to make four flights weekly to Clark, can each accommodate 460 passengers.

Luciano said Tair's operations would be a big help to the 1.4 million overseas Filipino workers in Saudi Arabia.

Thai Air Asia, the third budget airline to locate in Clark after Singapore's Tiger Airways and Malaysia's Air Asia, will start flights either in January or February next year.

Luciano said the airlines' operations here did not violate President Macapagal-Arroyo's Executive Order 500 and EO 500-A.

Both EOs liberalized air policies at the DMIA, but the latter required designated status from states to which an airline is based.

Pro-DMIA groups have asked Ms Arroyo to review and amend EO 500-A.

Luciano said the worst that EO 500-A could do is restrict the expansion plans of Tiger Airways and Air Asia.

As this developed, Luciano said senators were "inclined" to declare the DMIA a "freeport," thus granting locators here tax incentives.

The idea cropped up as the Clark Investors and Locators Association lobbied to regain the tax perks ordered stopped by the Supreme Court in July 2005.

The high court twice ruled against reconsideration.

Also, senators appeared to support proposals to grant the tax privilege to export firms within Clark's main zone, Luciano said.

The CIAC, a subsidiary of the state-owned Clark Development Corp., has earmarked P150 million for civil works and equipment for DMIA's terminal expansion project.

Three bus companies—Philtranco, Partas and Genesis—serve the Clark route through various points in Metro Manila, Baguio City and Pangasinan.

Gov't collected ₱61.7B in additional taxes

VAT proceeds in the first 10 months seen to exceed target

By Michelle V. Remo

THE GOVERNMENT GENERATED P61.7 billion in additional taxes from January to October this year due to the implementation of the Value-Added Tax Reform Law (VAT).

The Department of Finance reported that the proceeds from the VAT in the first 10 months of the year exceeded the target for the period by P1.4 billion.

Finance Secretary Margarito Teves said in a statement that the VAT collection in the 10-month period kept the government on track to meet the full-year target of P75 billion.

"We are hopeful that we will be able to hit our target revenues from VAT because almost a third of the revenue collection from this tax measure is allocated to needed investments in social services and infrastructure," Teves said.

The VAT law, which had a tough time sailing through Congress amid protests from militant and consumer groups, basically expanded the coverage of the VAT and raised the VAT rate from 10 to 12 percent.

The law, or Republic Act No. 9337, likewise contains a minor provision of raising the corporate income tax rate from 32 to 35 percent.

Data from the DOF showed that, of the P61.7 billion worth of VAT collection in the 10 months to October, the Bureau of Customs accounted for the bulk, or P47.5 billion.

The BOC exceeded its goal for the period by P2.1 billion.

On the other hand, the BIR accounted for P14.2 billion of the VAT proceeds. This is short of the revenue agency's P14.9-billion goal.

The BIR imposes value-added tax on domestically produced and rendered goods and services, while the BOC charges VAT on imports.

The DOF said BOC collections were boosted by higher oil imports and higher prices of coal.

Under the VAT law, the government is mandated to use 30 percent of the proceeds this year for social services such as education, health and infrastructure.

The share of social services in the proceeds of VAT will increase to 35 percent next year, 40 percent in 2008, 45 percent in 2009, and to 50 percent in 2010.

The rest of the proceeds from VAT will be used for deficit-reduction purposes.

The government intends to cut its budget deficit to P63 billion from the programmed deficit of P125 billion this year. The government also aims to have a zero budget gap by 2008.

The government is hard-pressed to meet the expected revenues from VAT. Credit rating agencies said they are closely monitoring the government's ability to realize the revenue goals from the VAT law, considered the centerpiece of the Arroyo administration's fiscal reform agenda.

BUSINESS AS USUAL
A man emerges out into the sun and begins selling miniature handcrafted galleons in Boracay, Aklan, shortly after Typhoon Seniang battered the island.
ARNOLD ALMACEN/INQUIRERVISAYAS

High growth, low inflation rates seen for RP

By Doris C. Dumlao

GLOBAL debt watchdog Standard & Poor's expects the Philippines to post a higher economic growth rate and a lower inflation rate next year.

It also cast a favorable outlook for the rest of the Asia-Pacific region.

In S&P's latest commentary entitled "Asia-Pacific Macroeconomic Overview and 2007 Outlook," the country's gross domestic product (GDP) growth was projected to pick up to a range of 5.5 to 6 percent, from a 5 to 5.5 percent range this year.

On the other hand, the country's inflation rate was seen softening to a range of 5.3-5.8 percent next year from 6.6-7.1 percent this year.

"Although the US economy is expected to slow in 2007, the impact on Asia-Pacific, given its dependence on exports, is expected to be offset by the growth in Japan and continuing momentum in China and India—two of the world's fastest growing economies today," S&P economist Subir Gokarn said.

"Increasing inter-dependence within the region as a growth driver will be reinforced by moderating oil and other commodity prices, which will help to keep inflation in check and provide room for the central banks to ease their positions on interest rates."

A projected growth rate of 2.3 percent for Japan, the S&P economist said, could provide substantial ballast to the regional economy in a situation where the largest external source of demand, the United States, would likely slow down.

China is seen to sustain a robust growth of 9.7-10.2 percent, while India is projected to expand by 7.5-8 percent.

In Southeast Asia, the projected GDP growth for the Philippines is slightly better than the forecast of 4.5-5 percent for Thailand, and 5.4-5.9 percent for Malaysia. But the country's growth may be slightly lower than the 6.1-6.6 percent forecast range for Indonesia.

The Asia-Pacific region, as a whole, is seen to expand by close to 7 percent—still the world's fastest growing region.

The report added that, after hitting historical highs for several quarters, global oil prices would retreat to levels that are somewhat safer from an importing country's viewpoint.

Despite the projected softening of Philippine inflation rate next year, it was still expected to be higher than the forecast range of 3.8 to 4.3 percent for Thailand, and 2.4 to 2.9 percent for Malaysia. But the country's performance is expected to be better than Indonesia's 5.9-6.4 percent.

At Naia 3, PAL eyes $60M in savings, 8M passengers

By Riza T. Olchondra

THE PHILIPPINE AIRLINES (PAL) group may save at least $60 million and serve eight million passengers—that is, if the airline is allowed to operate, alongside other carriers, at the Terminal 3 of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia 3) next year.

Airline president Jaime Bautista said in an interview that its negotiations with the Manila International Airport Authority (MIAA) is progressing, and that the flag carrier is really banking on being allowed to operate both domestic and international flights at the terminal.

PAL is currently negotiating with the MIAA for the use of four gates.

Bautista said that if plans for consolidated operations at the Naia 3 would be blocked, the flag carrier will have to fork out $60 million to buy a new airplane on top of its $1.5-billion acquisition cost for new long-haul Boeing 777 planes.

The new airplane will be needed by PAL to maintain its flight schedules once its domestic and international operations are separated.

"Right now, we use certain planes for both domestic and international flights," Bautista explained. "Sometimes a plane will land from a domestic flight and take off with a fresh load of passengers for an international flight."

If its Terminal 3 plans were to push through, airline officials expect to maintain domestic operations at Naia 2, while international operations are transferred to Naia 3.

Bautista said a still uncalculated amount of additional expenditures would also be needed for having redundant equipment and airplane crew once domestic and international operations were separated.

PAL expects to see huge savings and increased loading capacity if it can operate domestic and international flights together with its sister-airline Air Philippines.

MIAA had already said that it had no objections to PAL operating both domestic and international flights at Naia3.

For 2007, NFA sets aside ₱28B for rice program

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY has earmarked some P28 billion for its domestic and foreign rice procurement program for 2007, NFA administrator Gregorio Y. Tan Jr. said yesterday.

Tasked to ensure food security, the state-owned NFA would need to maintain a buffer stock of rice to keep prices affordable while giving farmers commensurate income for their produce. It buys grain from the farmers, particularly during the peak of harvest season, to be used in building up the buffer stock.

If local production falls short of demand, NFA imports the staple to fill the gap and maintain the desired level of inventory. The NFA draws from the stock and infuses it in the market whenever the need arises.

Tan said the agency would again seek the Finance Department's approval for its borrowing limits for next year. In 2006, the Department of Finance allowed a P20-billion borrowing ceiling for NFA.

The NFA has been resorting to government-guaranteed borrowings since the budget given to it by the national government falls short of its actual requirement. The NFA's loans usually come from government-owned and -controlled commercial banks.

The state-owned trading firm has been criticized for incurring huge losses, amounting to P33 billion over the last three years.

"This is due to our mandate to buy *palay* at a higher price to benefit farmers, but sell it at a low price to help consumers," Tan explained.

In a bid to bring down losses this year, the NFA has asked the DOF to defer the collection of P13 billion in tariffs on the rice importation the state trading firm has made in the past years. Since 2002, the agency has been paying as much as 50 percent tariff on its rice importation and this, Tan said, has proven to be a heavy burden for the NFA.

"We actually borrow from local banks to pay these duties and, because of this, our interest expense reached P2 billion," he said.

With international rice price now ranging from $250 to $270 per metric ton, the country's rice imports this year could cost P15 to P20 billion, given a projected rice production shortfall of not less than 1.4 million metric tons.

BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE-INFRASTRUCTURE
Cebu Capitol, Cebu City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Province of Cebu, through its Bids and Awards Committee-Infrastructure (BAC-INFRA), invites contractors registered with and classified by the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) to apply for eligibility to bid for the hereunder contract:

Name of Contract : Asphalting of Balamban - Lamesa Road
Location : Batamban Cebu
Brief Description : Road asphalting
Approved Budget For the Contract : P 9,027,548.62
Contract Duration : 90 Calendar Days

Prospective bidders should possess a valid PCAB License applicable to the contract, have completed a similar contract with a value of at least 50% of the ABC, and have key personnel and equipment available for the prosecution of the contract. The BAC-INFRA will use non discretionary pass/fail criteria in the Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the in Preliminary Examination of Bids. The BAC-INFRA will conduct post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statements and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-bidding Conference, Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations-A (IRR-A).

The schedule of BAC-INFRA activities is as follows:

BAC-INFRA Activities	Schedule
1. Receipt from prospective bidders of Letters of Intent (LOI) including Applications for Eligibility	December 19, 2006
2. Issuance of Eligibility Forms	December 13 to 19, 2006
3. Receipt of Eligibility Requirements	December 13 to 19, 2006
4. Notice of Results of Eligibility Check	December 21, 2006
5. Issuance of Plans and Bid Documents	December 22, 2006
6. Pre-bid Conference	December 27, 2006
7. Receipt and Opening of Bids	January 15, 2006

The BAC-INFRA Secretariat will issue to prospective bidder's Eligibility Forms at the Provincial Engineer's Office, Capitol Compound, Cebu City, upon their submission of a Letter of Intent and upon payment of non-refundable amount of Fifty Pesos (P50.00) to the Cash Receipts Division, Provincial Treasurer's Office. Prospective bidders shall submit the Eligibility Requirements to, and may also obtain the results of the Eligibility Check from, the aforementioned address. For further inquiries, one may call the Secretariat at (032) 255-6123.

The BAC-INFRA will issue Bidding Documents including Plans and Specifications only to bidders declared by the BAC-INFRA to be eligible for the bidding upon payment of non-refundable amount of Four Thousand Pesos (P 4,000.00) to the Cash Receipts Division, Provincial Treasurer's Office.

The Province of Cebu assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of their bids and, reserves the right to reject any and all bids, waive any defect or informality in the bids, declare a failure of bidding or not to award the contract.

(Sgd.) EDUARDO T. HABIN
Chairman

(PDI—Dec. 13, 2006)

Zamboanga City Electric Cooperative, Inc.
(ZAMCELCO)
Zamboanga City

INVITATION TO BID

The Zamboanga City Electric Cooperative, Inc. (ZAMCELCO) at Putik, this city per requisite under Board Policies on Pre-Qualifications, and Bids and Awards, invites ALL interested Bidders/Suppliers to bid for the supply of the following electrical materials/equipment/items, to wit:

No.	Quantity	Unit	Item Description
1	166	PCS	ANCHOR BLOCK CONCRETE, 4'x8"
2	185	PCS	ATTACHMENT GUY, IRON HOOK
3	65	PCS	BOLT, DOUBLE UPSET 5/8 x 10
4	184	PCS	BOLT, EYE 5/8 x 9
5	15	PCS	BOLT, EYE 5/8 x 18
6	106	PCS	BOLT, MACHINE 5/8 x 8
7	396	PCS	BOLT, MACHINE 5/8 x 10
8	96	PCS	BOLT, MACHINE 5/8 x 12
9	131	PCS	BRACKET SECONDARY DEADEND
10	67	PCS	CLAMP, HOT LINE
11	171	PCS	CLAMP, BONDING
12	378	PCS	CLAMP, LOOP DEADEND
13	228	PCS	CLEVIS, SEC. SWINGING, LG
14	32	PCS	CLEVIS, SHACKLE ANCHOR
15	26000	MTRS	CONDUCTOR, ACSR #1/0 BARE
16	12500	MTRS	CONDUCTOR, ACSR #2 BARE
17	300	MTRS	CONDUCTOR, DUPLEX #1/0
18	5200	MTRS	CONDUCTOR, DUPLEX #2
19	689	PCS	CONNECTOR COMPRESSION YHO-150
20	21	SETS	CUT-OUT. ARR. COMB. POLE-ARM MT., 15KV, 200A
21	267	PCS	INSULATOR, SPOOL 1 3/4 DIA.
22	187	PCS	INSULATOR, SPOOL 3 1/2 DIA
23	150	PCS	INSULATOR, PIN TYPE 7.6 KV
24	153	PCS	INSULATOR, SUSPENSION 7.6 KV (SILICON)
25	4	UNITS	TRANSFORMER, 50KVA, DOUBLE BUSHING 7.6KV/120-240, PHILEC BRAND
26	16	UNITS	TRANSFORMER, 25KVA, DOUBLE BUSHING 7.6KV/120-240, PHILEC BRAND
27	1	UNIT	TRANSFORMER, 15KVA, DOUBLE BUSHING 7.62KV/120-240, PHILEC BRAND
28	175	PCS	ROD, ANCHOR 5/8 x 7
29	1027	PCS.	WASHER, 2-1/4 x 2-1/4
30	8700	FT.	WIRE, GUY 3/8, 7 STRAND

You may secure the Pre-qualification Requirements from the office of the Finance Department, ZAMCELCO Complex in Putik, this city anytime during office hours and submit the same upon completion of all requirements thereof.

Submission of the Pre-qualification Requirements shall not be later than 5:00 p.m. of December 12, 2006 and no documents appertaining thereto, shall be accepted thereafter.

All applicants will be duly notified as to the results of the pre-qualification eligibility process. Only those who are pre-qualified will be allowed to participate in the bidding.

Bidding will be conducted on December 19, 2006.

Sealed bid in duplicate copies should be submitted to the Committee on Bids and Awards at the Office of the Finance Department at the above-mentioned address on or before 2:00 p.m. of December 19, 2006. Five percent (5%) Bidder's Bond is required as a matter of policy.

The right to reject any or all bids, to waive any formality therein, or to accept such bid as may be considered advantageous to the coop is hereby reserved as an absolute prerogative of ZAMCELCO.

(Sgd.) REINERIO R. RAMOS
General Manager

(PDI—Dec. 13, 2006)

Private water suppliers see modest gains

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE PRIVATE UTILITIES PROVIDING WATER to Metro Manila expect modest financial returns by yearend despite the reduction in supply of raw water this quarter.

Officials of Manila Water Co. Inc. and Maynilad Water Services Inc. said that they could still achieve positive bottom lines this year.

For listed Manila Water Co. Inc., which supplies water to Metro Manila's east zone, its president Antonino T. Aquino said that the company expects to do better, and even exceed the P1.48 billion it posted at the end of 2005.

"With our system improvements, we have managed to shelter our operations from the raw water cutback imposed by the National Water Resources Board last month," Aquino said.

Also, the company hopes to further reduce its non-revenue water (NRW) level, which is now at 30.4 percent, he said.

"(It) may be possible, but it will be difficult," Aquino said, referring to the company's effort to reduce NRW, or water lost due to pilferage and damaged pipes.

West concessionaire Maynilad Water, on the other hand, sees a positive but lower income at P1.6 billion by the end of 2006, said Maynilad vice president for finance Rodolfo B. Reyno.

This is a 24-percent reduction from the P2.1 billion net income the company posted in 2005 due to the change in its customer base and the unresolved high level of NRW, Reyno told the INQUIRER.

"The profile of our customer base has been changing in the last 18 months, and so far we have acquired more residential customers than commercial and/or industrial clients," he explained. "(This) will have an impact on our bottom lines."

Maynilad residential customers now comprise 75 percent of its 6.5 million customers as against the commercial and/or industrial clients that now constitute the remaining 25 percent.

Residential customers are charged lower rates compared to commercial and industrial customers, Reyno said.

"We may also credit the effort of our management and staff for doing their best to curb our operational expenses and maximize available resources," Maynilad president Fiorello Estuar said.

Maynilad still has a high level of NRW at 65 percent.

The company's re-privatization is expected to be completed by the end of this month, according to the government regulator Metropolitan Waterworks Sewerage System.

Code-sharing extends Cathay, Dragonair reach

CATHAY PACIFIC AIRWAYS HAS FORMALLY announced a new code-share arrangement with Dragonair, the latest initiative in the integration of the two carriers.

Under the code-share partnership, Cathay Pacific and Dragonair will jointly operate through an internal routing deal.

This arrangement will expand the regional reach of both airlines and give passengers more flight choices.

For example, passengers who want to go to Shanghai can choose to fly the Cathay Pacific daily service, which will be launched on Dec. 1, or 16 other daily flights which are code-shared with Dragonair.

The code-share applies to seven cities.

It is now in effect on flights to Shanghai, Beijing, Xiamen, Tokyo and Kota Kinabalu. The code-share will later apply to two new Dragonair destinations: Phuket, which will be launched on Dec. 15, and Busan, which is still subject to government approval. Flights to Busan may begin on Jan. 19, 2007.

The code-share will extend the Cathay Pacific network by three destinations—Kota Kinabalu, Phuket and Busan—to 105, again giving passengers more choice on routes where both carriers operate.

"Filipinos now have more choices in terms of routes, plus the opportunity to visit more places," Cathay country manager Vivian Lo said in a statement. "Travellers from the Philippines and overseas can conveniently book a Cathay Pacific ticket to the code-shared destinations through the Cathay Pacific website."

Dragonair became a wholly owned subsidiary of Cathay Pacific effective last September.

Recent developments since the integration of the two airlines include the relaunch of Dragonair's Phuket service, a reduction in the "Minimum Connecting Time" between the two carriers that led to at least 451 same-day connections each week for passengers traveling through Hong Kong International Airport, and the launch of a new Dragonair service to Busan.

Work is ongoing in other areas, including the alignment of flight schedules for the two carriers, which promises to redefine service and convenience for both Cathay Pacific and Dragonair passengers. *Riza T. Olchondra*

Debt, power eat up LRTA revenue

Rail authority posted losses of more than P896M in the 1st 9 months

By Riza T. Olchondra

EVEN IF IT MANAGED TO REGISTER higher revenue in the first nine months, on top of a government subsidy, the Light Rail Transit Authority (LRTA) still suffered from ballooning losses due to surging power expenditures.

The rail authority posted net losses of more than P896 million for the nine-month period ending in September, compared with over P606 million in losses for the same period last year.

A consolidated income statement from the LRTA showed that it sold P1.66-billion worth of tickets for both Line 1 (Monumento to Baclaran) and Line 2 (Recto to Santolan) from January to September 2006. The figure was more than P146 million higher than the P1.51 billion it posted for the same period last year.

Even counting discounts and refunds, the railway authority still chalked up P1.184 billion in net revenue for the period ending in September, or P145 million more than the P1.51 billion it saw last year.

Most operating costs and other expenditures were higher this year, but bank charges and expenses for power were glaringly higher, eating up big chunks of revenue.

Bank charges and interest payments for loans ate up a whopping P1.169 billion for both Line 1 and Line 2 this year, compared with P818.222 million in consolidated bank payments last year.

LRTA's power consumption amounted to more than P345 million for the nine-month period—P214 million for Line 1 and P130 million for Line 2.

During the same period last year, power use had cost P303 billion for both lines. More than P188 million was paid for Line 1 and more than P115 million for Line 2.

Subsidies of P32.812 million for the nine-month period this year and P5 million for last year could barely save the authority from losses.

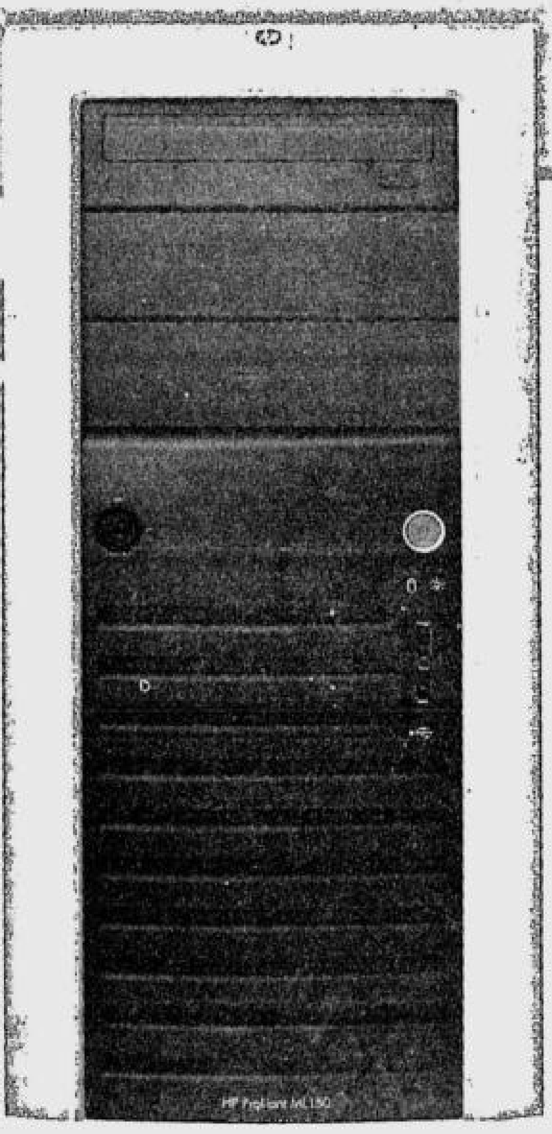
The result was a net loss of P187 million for Line 1 and P709 million for Line 2 as of September, compared with a net loss of P227 million for Line 1 and P379 million for Line 2.

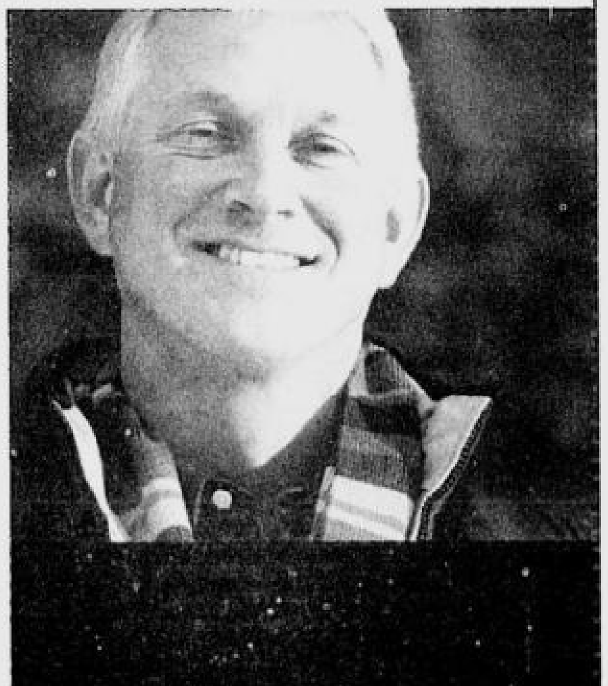
Whether the authority will increase yearend sales enough to at least break even for 2006 depends on the turnover in December, LRTA administrator Mel Robles said in an interview.

"December is really the peak," he said. "The third quarter is traditionally slow and December is the big earner, so a lot will depend on traffic this holiday season."

As for ticket prices, Robles was adamant that the LRT would not raise ticket prices despite its financial difficulties.

"It has been three years since we increased prices, and we are not looking at another increase yet," Robles said. "After all, we are still operating the LRT as a public service. For now, we will find other ways to cope, such as increasing capacity to boost revenues."





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Fed seek to slow US economy, temper inflation

Economists see key interest rates moving by middle of 2007

WASHINGTON—THE FEDERAL Reserve, under first-year chair Ben Bernanke, appears close to achieving the tricky maneuver of steering the US economy to a slowdown that will keep inflation under control.

That is the growing view of economists who believe Bernanke and his colleagues are nearing the goal of slowing economic growth as a way of lowering inflation pressures while making sure the slowdown does not become something more severe such as a recession.

It is widely expected that the Fed will hold a key interest rate unchanged at its last meeting of the year on Tuesday.

Many economists believe it could be the middle of 2007 before the Fed moves rates again if the economy performs as expected.

"Call it beginner's luck, but I think Bernanke, in his first year as chair, will achieve the soft landing he wants," said David Jones, chief economist for DMJ Advisors, a consulting firm in Colorado.

In February, Bernanke succeeded Alan Greenspan, who retired after 18 ½ years as Fed chair.

During that period, Greenspan steered the economy into soft landings, including a decade-long economic expansion from 1991 until early 2001, the longest in US history.

Greenspan also presided over Fed credit tightening that contributed to recessions in 1990 and 2001, showing how tough it is to guide a $13 trillion (euro 9.9 trillion) economy.

Worried that inflation could get out of hand, the Fed raised a key interest rate 17 consecutive times from mid-2004 through June of this year, pushing the federal funds rate to 5.25 percent, up from a 46-year low of 1 percent.

Since August, however, the Fed has held meetings in August, September and October in which it left rates unchanged as it monitored the impact the long string of rate increases was having.

Should the Fed leave rates unchanged on Tuesday as expected, it would be a break for millions of consumer and business borrowers because banks' prime lending rates would remain frozen at 8.25 percent, the highest level for this key benchmark since early 2001.

Growth has slowed dramatically this year, going from a sizzling annual rate of 5.6 percent from January through March to just 2.2 percent in the summer as consumers have slowed their spending in the face of soaring energy prices, higher interest rates and a crumbling housing market.

There had been worries that growth was slowing so much that the Fed might have been forced to reverse course and start reducing interest rates. But Bernanke and other Fed officials have signaled that the central bank was still too worried about inflation to start cutting rates.

Many economists believe the Fed's first rate cut will occur around June of 2007 and they believe there could be two quarter-point reductions next year.

By June, analysts believe the Fed's preferred measure of inflation, which excludes volatile energy and food prices, will have dropped from an increase on a yearly basis of 2.4 percent currently closer to the Fed's comfort zone of gains of 1 percent to 2 percent.

The rate cuts will be needed because unemployment, which ticked up slightly to 4.5 percent last month, will have risen closer to 5 percent by the middle of next year, economists are forecasting.

With the economy growing at rates hovering around 2 percent, there is the potential that an unexpected shock could wreck hopes for a benign slowdown.

"There is always the risk that the economy could get sideswiped by something unforeseen," said David Wyss, chief economist at Standard & Poor's in New York.

One of the biggest threats is seen in the once-booming housing market, which has slowed considerably this year with sales and prices declining, which could depress consumer spending should it worsen further.

Economists mention, however, that jobs are still being created at a solid pace as a factor that should keep spending from falling too much.

"I think the Fed is going to get what it wants, which is an economy with a little more slack and a little less inflation," said Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's Economy.com. *AP*

Talks begin on IMF voting power

WASHINGTON—TALKS ON REBALANCING voting power in the International Monetary Fund began on Monday with some major emerging market economies complaining that an opening proposal fails to clearly spell out changes needed to give them more say in the institution.

The proposal is the beginning of what is likely to be a protracted negotiation over a new voting formula that would reflect the rise of emerging market economies in Asia and Latin America in particular.

An IMF staff paper circulated ahead of Monday's meeting, and obtained by Reuters, avoided the difficult issue of a specific proposal for a new formula. Instead, the paper described itself as the "starting point" for discussions.

"It is hoped ... the issues under discussion can begin to be narrowed down, leading in coming months to a convergence of views around a specific proposal or narrow range of proposals," the paper said.

However, officials from developing countries expressed disappointment with the paper, which some said lacked the leadership needed to force the politically-tough debate forward.

Some said a rebalancing of IMF power had become more critical as the IMF sought to strengthen its surveillance of the global economy, and as developing countries like China and India become important drivers of global growth with the United States economy slowing.

The current voting formula is based on the world's economic order when the IMF was formed after World War II with the United States and Europe as dominant economic powers.

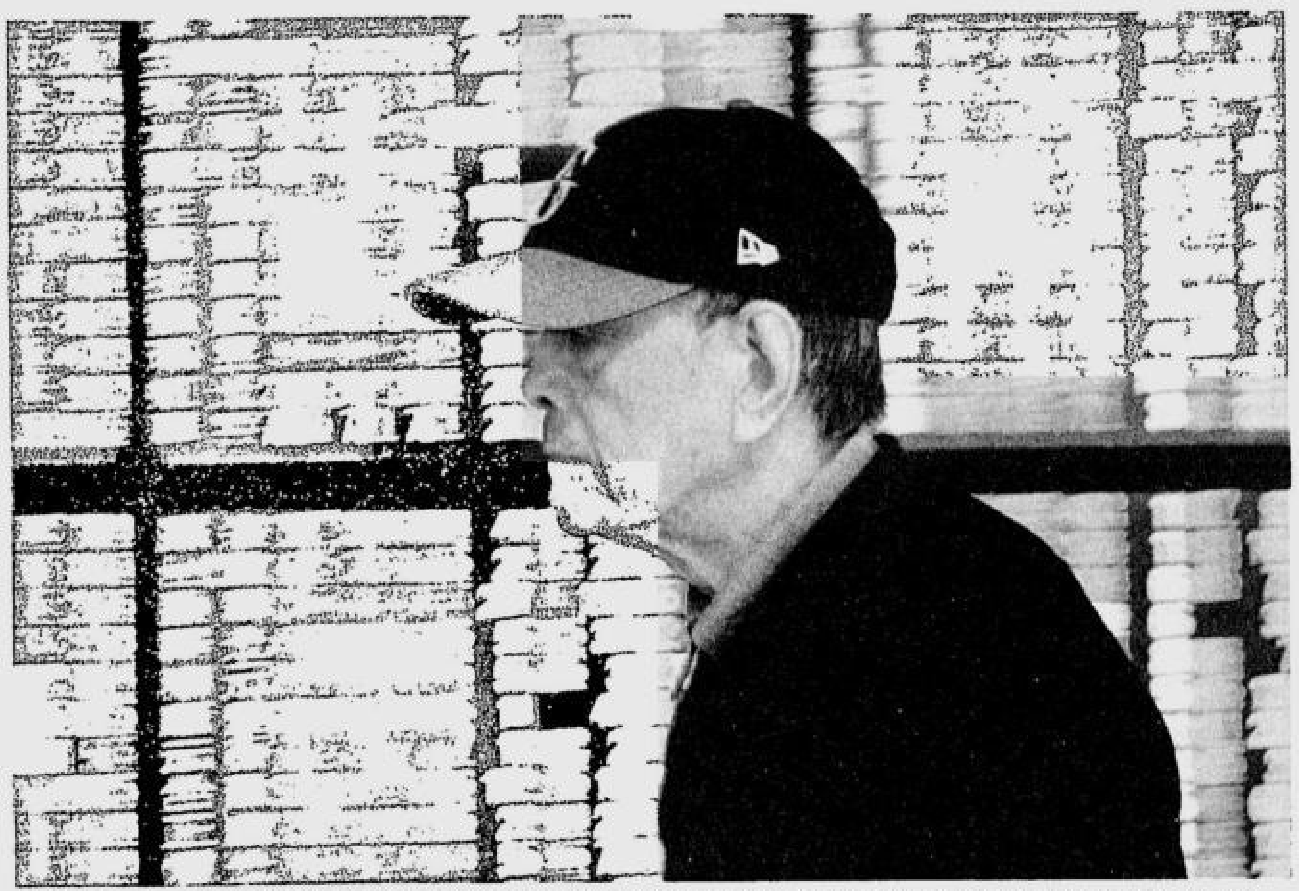
The Group of Seven nations—the United States, Japan, Germany, Britain, France, Italy and Canada—currently wield around 45 percent of the IMF's quotas, or membership subscriptions, which largely determine voting power.

Under the current formula some large emerging market countries have fewer votes than small European countries.

The IMF's 184 member countries in September endorsed a plan that increased the voting power of China, Mexico, Turkey and South Korea, and agreed to a second round of adjustments, to be completed by 2008, based on a new formula.

Some big emerging market economies like India, Brazil, Argentina, Egypt and Iran voted against the plan saying it did not go far enough. The objecting nations doubt whether European countries are willing to relinquish voting power to emerging economies.

Emerging economies have warned that the IMF's standing could be eroded in the developing world, where critics already resent what they see as IMF's high-handed policy advice. *Reuters*



A MAN walks past electronic stock index monitors in Taipei. Taiwan share prices closed sharply lower as investors stepped up profit-taking amid lack of positive leads and the mixed outcome of the weekend mayoral votes continued to weigh on sentiment, dealers said. AFP

Nissan in no hurry to merge with new partner

ATSUGI, JAPAN—NISSAN MOTOR Co. is under no pressure to merge with a new partner, but will do so if an appropriate opportunity arises, chief executive Carlos Ghosn said on Tuesday.

His comments follow scuttled talks between Nissan, France's Renault and US automaker General Motors Corp. on a merger that would have produced an automotive juggernaut spanning America, Europe and Asia.

"We're not at the level of the biggest, but we can compete fairly well," Ghosn said of Nissan's current status.

"I don't think that adding a third partner is a necessity when you already have a scale like this."

Nissan formed an alliance with France's Renault SA in 1999.

Ghosn held open the possibility of a further merger, but said it would depend on other factors.

He did not name any potential candidates.

"It's more a question of opportunity," said Ghosn, who was in Atsugi, southwest of Tokyo, at the opening of Nissan's new design studio complex, which will become the central hub for about two-thirds of its worldwide auto designers.

In early October, GM torpedoed three months of negotiations with Renault and Nissan.

The talks ended when GM sought payment from the other two companies for what it said would have been a disproportionate share of the benefits of an alliance.

Proponents argued that the alliance would create significant savings, but critics said it could be a distraction from GM's efforts to return to profitability.

While Ghosn was coy about further mergers, other Nissan executives have been more eager.

Dominique Thormann, Nissan North America's senior vice president for administration and finance, said last week that the talks with GM showed that expanding to a third party "makes sense."

Ghosn has been upbeat recently about the benefits of the Nissan-Renault pact, saying Renault's market capitalization, or the total value of its shares, has tripled, while Nissan's has grown fivefold.

The companies also make 72 percent of their purchases jointly.

Ghosn said the new high tech design center was needed to help cut production time needed to roll out new models.

Since 2001 Nissan has cut its lead time on new models by half to about 10 and a half months today, Ghosn said.

The new design studio, called the Project Imagination Factory, will employ about 600 of the company's 900 design staff. *AP*

Oil steady above $61/bl

SINGAPORE—OIL STEADIED OVER $61 ON Tuesday, supported by the potential for an OPEC supply cut this week after mild weather and high inventories in the United States had pushed prices down.

US crude prices traded steady at $61.22 a barrel at 10 a.m. yesterday after losing 81 cents on Monday. London Brent crude slipped 4 cents to $61.80 a barrel.

"Traders are selling as the weather in the US seems set to stay well warmer than normal," said Tobin Gorey of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia. "The same facts are driving OPEC to consider further cuts to output."

US heating demand is expected to be nearly 27 percent below normal this week, with warmer temperatures in most regions east of the Rockies, the National Weather Service said on Monday.

A narrow majority within OPEC want to cut the group's output further at Thursday's meeting, a top OPEC official told Reuters.

However, Saudi-owned newspaper Al Hayat quoted OPEC sources as saying the group would keep supply unchanged.

OPEC, which pumps more than a third of the world's oil, has implemented about 730,000 barrels per day (bpd) of a promised 1.2 million bpd cutback from November, according to a Reuters survey.

"Despite the market's skepticism on the effectiveness of OPEC action, the primary danger remains that short-term price weakness and a perception of oversupply could lead OPEC to over-tighten the market," said Barclays Capital.

US crude oil inventories are at the highest level for this time of year since 1993, though analysts in a Reuters poll expected crude stocks to have fallen by 700,000 barrels last week. The government data is due on Wednesday.

Apart from high inventories, analysts point to the weakening dollar, which reduces OPEC's revenue from dollar-denominated oil, as another reason that could push OPEC to take further action to stem a 22 percent price slide since a record over $78 in July.

The dollar fell against the euro on Tuesday, extending losses made after former Federal Reserve chair Alan Greenspan warned investors to expect a few more years of dollar weakness.

"The weaker dollar will also encourage the cartel's hawks to push for additional cuts this week in Nigeria," said JP Morgan.

OPEC linchpin Saudi Arabia has already told oil refiners in Asia that it will reduce their supplies next month to 8 percent below contracted volumes. About half of the kingdom's 7 million bpd of crude exports move to Asia. *Reuters*

A WORKER rides a bicycle past high-rise buildings in Shanghai, China. Poverty, water shortages, environmental crises: Asia's booming giants, China and India, confront daunting challenges as they strive to keep their economies expanding fast enough to raise growing numbers of their 2.3 billion people out of poverty. AP

Asian financial markets facing greater volatility, says S & P

General outlook remains positive despite weak US

SINGAPORE—ASIA-PACIFIC FINANCIAL markets will remain generally strong but face greater volatility and higher risks in 2007, Standard & Poor's said on Tuesday.

The US-based credit watchdog said in a statement that the regional economic outlook remained positive despite an expected US slowdown next year.

But higher financing costs, increased corporate borrowing and a frenzy of mergers and acquisitions (M and A) will fuel market volatility and add to the risks faced by investors, it warned.

"Although the trend is still broadly positive for the year ahead, there will be some negative credit stories too," said Ian Thompson, chief criteria officer for S & P's Ratings Services in the Asia-Pacific region.

S & P predicted a "slight rise" in corporate defaults and more "fallen angels"—debt issues moving off an investment-grade credit rating.

"At the same time, a continued boom in M and A in the region will increase share price volatility and the credit profile of potential acquirers and target companies, raising new uncertainties for debt and equity investors," it said.

Lorraine Tan, vice president at Standard & Poor's Equity Research, said that after a spectacular performance by regional stock markets in 2006, tighter liquidity will have a "dampening effect" next year.

Economic growth in Asia will again be faster than in other regions in 2007.

The growth is underpinned by Japan's recovery, continuing momentum in China and India and intra-regional trade, which will offset a US slowdown, the statement said.

The potential for a housing "bubble" to burst remains, but property prices should continue to be supported by pent-up demand and rising middle class incomes, it added.

"We believe earnings growth in 2007 and beyond will feel the pinch from rising input costs, wage growth, a heavier debt burden, and higher interest rates," said Thompson.

S & P said labor constraints could also be a problem.

"Wage pressures are expected to build in Asia because of higher living costs, increased pension and healthcare costs, skills shortage, rising employment levels and slower growth in the labor pool," the statement said. *AFP*

IFC corners 5% of PNOC-EDC

Purchase supports WB strategy of backing geothermal energy

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE WORLD BANK'S PRIVATE sector investment arm has cornered about a 5-percent stake in PNOC Energy Development Corp. through a $50-million equity investment in the geothermal company's initial public offering.

"International Finance Corp.'s investment in (Philippine National Oil Co.'s best-performing subsidiary) fits our strategy of supporting infrastructure investments and promoting renewable energy development, a priority area for the government of the Philippines," said Vipul Bhagat, IFC's country manager for the Philippines and Thailand.

Proceeds of PNOC-EDC's IPO would be used to rehabilitate, expand and acquire new equipment for developing geothermal power, a clean and renewable energy source that is abundant in the Philippines.

Bhagat said additional investments by PNOC-EDC should help reduce the cost of power in the Philippines, which would help make the country more competitive as an investment location.

IFC said the PNOC-EDC's public offering helps restore investor confidence and increase private sector participation in the power sector.

Bhagat said IFC was confident PNOC-EDC could become a global player in the development of geothermal resources with the success of the IPO and its improved access to capital markets.

PNOC-EDC is mainly a geothermal power company with an installed capacity of 1,142 megawatts, equivalent to about 7 percent of the country's total power generation capacity and 60 percent of geothermal capacity.

The firm owns and operates four steam fields: Bacman in southern Luzon, Leyte A and B in Leyte, Palinpinon in Negros and Mt. Apo in Mindanao.

PNOC-EDC is also currently developing new geothermal projects that could raise an additional 265 MW capacity.

Al-Amanah urged to forge joint ventures

By Nash B. Maulana
Inquirer Mindanao

COTABATO CITY—THE AL-Amanah Islamic Investment Bank of the Philippines (AIIBP) has to forge joint ventures with Islamic institutions before it can be privatized, said Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri.

"First, the Islamic bank should establish joint venture linkages with foreign institutions, and I have asked the Privatization Management Office to check on the requirements (of privatization)," Neri told the INQUIRER in an interview here.

Privatization requirements for AIIBP include the formation of a regulatory body on Islamic Banking within the Bangko Sentral Ng Pilipinas (BSP) and an organized AIIBP Sharia Advisory Council.

None of these bodies have been activated, the bank's officials said.

AIIBP Chair Datu Ali Sangki admitted the country's Islamic bank had been "ailing" and hardly improved since its creation in 1988 under Republic Act 6848, authored by then Maguindanao Representative Michael Mastura.

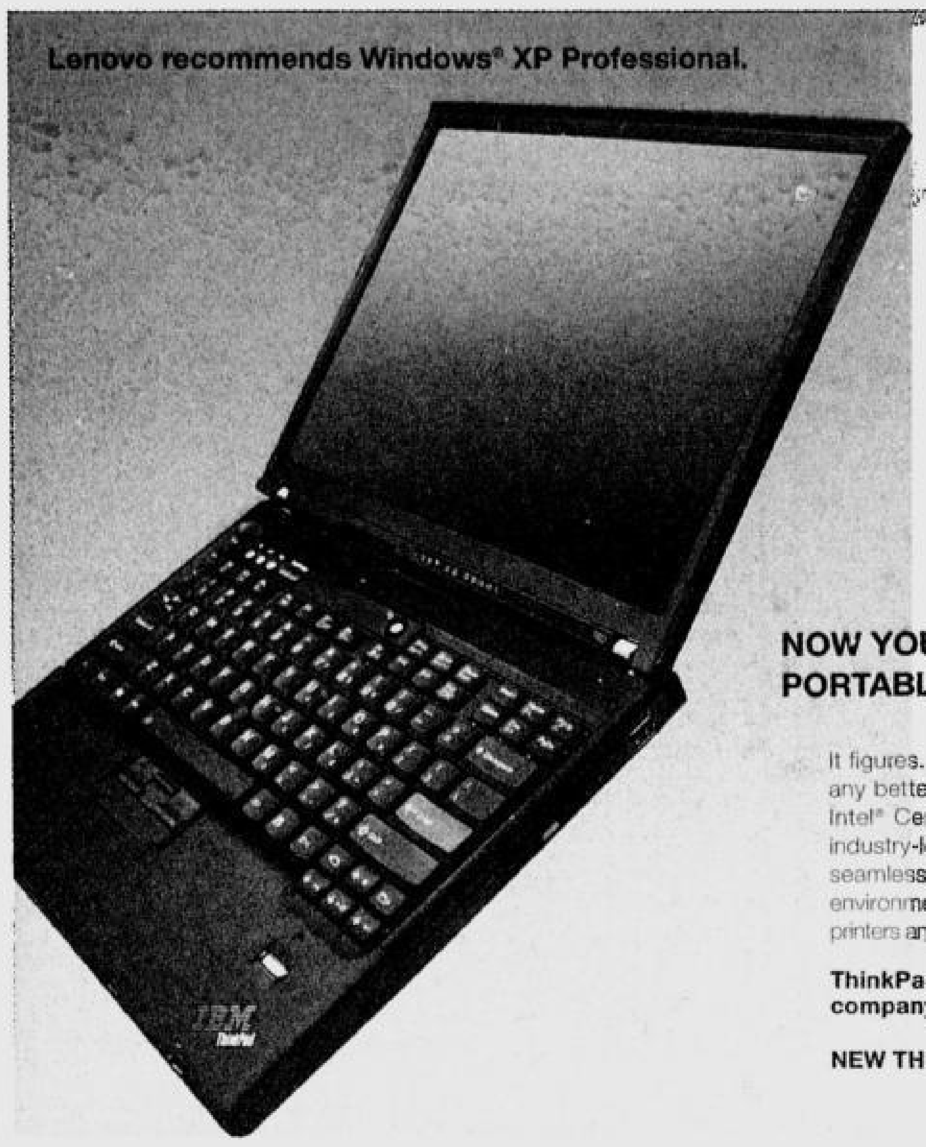
Sangki said AIIBP was studying several schemes to attract joint venture partners and strengthen its investment potentials.

AIIBP has an authorized capital of P1 billion, and it was created to provide a "venue" for Islamic investments, loan-friendly schemes and cash operations.

These include: Musharaka (profit-and-loss-sharing); mudaraba (loans for partnership); ijara (financing) and interest-free cash deposits for safekeeping.

Sangki said the bank's board had asked for an amendment to a BSP Memorandum Order, which excludes the AIIBP from the list of government depository banks.

He added that AIIBP wanted to open up a dollar remittance service for overseas Filipino workers in the Middle East.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External Microphone, Headphone/Line out, 3 USB 2.0, Db-15 monitor port, IR, RJ-11, RJ-45, Wireless Switch	External Microphone, Headphone/Line out, 3 USB 2.0, Db-15 monitor port, IR, RJ-11, RJ-45, Wireless Switch	External Microphone, Headphone/Line out, 3 USB 2.0, Db-15 monitor port, IR, RJ-11, RJ-45, Wireless Switch
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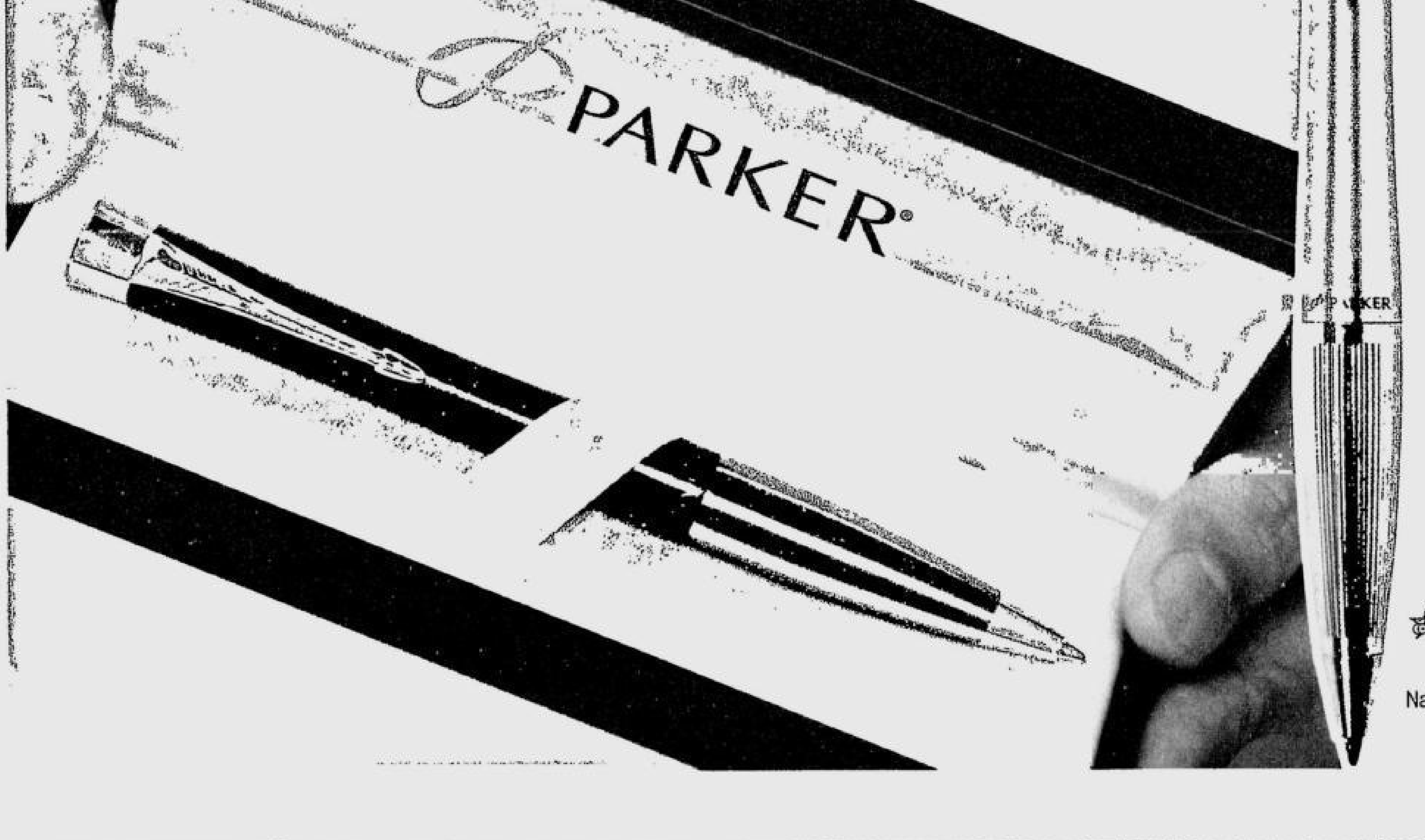
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BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE (BAC) SECRETARIAT OFFICE
Tel. No. (632) 455-2758 Mobile Phone: (+63) 928 4102732 Email: vsvillarama@nfa.gov.ph

RE-INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Printing of Registration Forms for 2007

The *NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY (NFA)*, through its *2007 Corporate Operating Budget* intends to apply the sum of *P558,500.00* being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for *the Printing of Registration Forms for 2007.*

LOT	PARTICULARS	Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC)
1	4,400 pads of Year 2007 Registration and Licensing Forms	308,500.00
2	5,000 booklets on NFA Rules and Regulations on Grains Business	250,000.00

Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.

The *NFA* now invites Bids from eligible Bidders for *the Printing of Registration Forms for 2007.* Delivery period is 45 calendar days. The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, **Instruction to Bidders (ITB).**

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB.

Interested Bidders may obtain further information from the *NFA-BAC SECRETARIAT* and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from *8:00 A.M. TO 5:00 P.M.*

A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from the address below and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee in the amount of P2,000.00 in the form of *CASH*. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative. Prospective bidders who secured the bidding documents for the failed bidding of November 30, 2006 are no longer required to pay anew the non-refundable fee of P2,000.00 for the bid documents.

The *NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY* will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on *December 21, 2006 at 2:00 p.m.* at the *NFA Board Room, 6th floor, Philsugin Bldg., North Avenue, Quezon City.*

Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered at the *NFA Board Room, 6th floor, Philsugin Bldg., North Avenue, Quezon City* on January 4, 2007 from 1:00 p.m. to 1:45 p.m. Late Bids shall not be accepted. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in the following form and amount.

Form of Security	Required Amount in Percent of ABC
Cash, cashier's Check, Manager's Check, Bank draft or Irrevocable Letter of Credit	One Percent (1%)
Bank Guarantee	One and a half percent (1.5%)
Surety Bond stamped "Callable on Demand" on the face of the Bond issued by GSIS	Two and a half percent (2.5%)
Any combination of the above	Proportionate to share

Bid opening shall be on *January 4, 2007 at 2:00 p.m.* at the *NFA Board Room, 6th floor, Philsugin Bldg., North Avenue, Quezon City.* Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives.

In the event that the above dates shall be declared non-working days, the schedules shall automatically be reset to the next working day.

The *NFA* reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

Procuring Entity	*NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY*
Contact Person	*Jose D. Chua / Violeta S. Villarama*
Address	*Philsugin Bldg., North Ave., Diliman, Quezon City*
Telephone/Fax No.	*(632) 455-2758*
Mobile Phone	*(+63) 928 4102732*
e-mail address	*vsvillarama@nfa.gov.ph*
Website	*www.nfa.gov.ph*

(Sgd.) **PEDRO S. HERNANDO, JR.**
Deputy Administrator and BAC Chair
for Administration and General Support Services

(PDI - Dec. 6 & 13, 2006)

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

Notice is hereby given to the public that a warrant of arrest has been issued by the **REGIONAL TRIAL COURT - NATIONAL CAPITAL JUDICIAL REGION - BRANCH 101 of QUEZON CITY** against **ISIDRO T. ARENAS** whose picture appears above, in connection with **CRIMINAL CASE NO. Q-06-143070 for ESTAFA**. For any information leading to the lawful arrest of **MR. ISIDRO T. ARENAS** please call the **NATIONAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION (NBI).**

(PDI - Dec. 13, 2006)

Philippine Economic Zone Authority

Roxas Boulevard corner San Luis Street, Pasay City, Metro Manila, Philippines
Telephones (632) 5513438 • 5513454 • Facsimile (632) 5513436
E-mail: info@peza.gov.ph • website: www.peza.gov.ph

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

Supply and Delivery of Branded Personal Computers & Printers
(PEZA-HO-2006-32)

1. The Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA), through its Corporate Operating Budget for CY 2006 intends to apply the sum of PhP 3,640,000.00 being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for the Supply & Delivery of Branded Personal Computers and Printers. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.
2. The PEZA now invites Bids from eligible Bidders for the following GOODS which shall be awarded on a per lot basis:

Lot 1 –	29 Sets of Branded Personal Computers with UPS, 4 units of Serves with UPS, 19 Units of Dot Matrix Printer, and 10 Units of Inkjet Printer	PhP 3,300,000.00
Lot 2 –	15 Sets of Laser Printers and 2 Sets of A3 Laser Printers	PhP 340,000.00

The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB.

3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibilty check will be opened. Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a single similar project within the last three (3) years with an amount of at least 50% of the ABC and at least five (5) years experience in the manufacture and/or supply of the proposed product and is able to supply, install configure the proposed products and provide after sales support. In addition, bidders must have filed their latest annual income and business tax returns (previous 6 months) via the Electronic Filing and Payment System(eFPS) of the Bureau of Internal Revenue. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.
4. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be inspected and/or purchased by interested Bidders from 06-15 December 2006, Mondays to Fridays, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the address below and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee in the amount of PhP 2,000.00 and submission of a certified copy of their PhilGEPS Certificate of Registration. The method of payment will be cash basis only. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.
5. The PEZA will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on 19 December 2006, 2:00 p.m. at the 6th Floor, Social Hall, PEZA Building, Roxas Boulevard corner San Luis St., Pasay City.
6. Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address below on or before 11:00 a.m. of 03 January 2007. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in the form of GSIS Surety Bond in the amount of not less than 2.5% of the ABC or in the form of cash, certified check, cashier's check, bank draft or irrevocable letter of credit in the amount of not less than *1% of the ABC.* Late Bids shall not be accepted.
7. Bid opening shall be on 03 January 2007, 2:00 p.m. at the 6th Floor Social Hall, PEZA Bldg., Roxas Blvd. corner San Luis St., Pasay City. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend.
8. In case any of the above dates is declared a special non-working holiday, it will automatically be reset on the next working day.
9. The PEZA reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

Philippine Economic Zone Authority
Bids and Awards Committee Secretariat
3/F PEZA Building, Roxas Boulevard corner San Luis St., Pasay City.
Tel. No. 891-6444 / Telefax No. 551-9587
e-mail: peza_bac_secretariat@yahoo.com
website: www.peza.gov.ph

(PDI–Dec. 6 & 13, 2006)

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

The Microenterprise Access to Banking Services (MABS) Program is a United States Agency for International Development-funded program providing training and technical assistance to rural banks, helping them develop the capability to profitably provide loans and deposit services to the microenterprise sector.

MABS is seeking proposals from qualified organizations for the conversion of various existing training materials into e-learning formats. Conversion of these training materials will require the application of instructional design for e-learning formats in both online platforms and CD-based stand-alone materials. The services required shall aso include, but is not necessarily limited to, the following:

1. Instructional design and production services of seven (7) distance learning courses;
2. Uploading of courses to the Moodle platform to allow online testing by the MABS Distance Learning Technical Team;
3. Enhancement and revision of instructional design based on inputs and feedback resulting from the internal review and testing by MABS. The revised version shall be made available on the Moodle platform for future use.
4. Production of the Courses on CD-Rom

A detailed Request for Proposals, may be obtained by sending an e-mail to mabs_mla@mozcom.com. Please submit proposals via e-mail to mabs_mla@mozcom.com on or before December 20, 2006.

Proposals will be checked for completeness and will be evaluated based on the following:

1. Proven experience in instructional design for distance learning
2. Proven experience in production of on-line and CD-Rom based Distance Learning Courses
3. Capacity and references
4. Cost proposal

(PDI–Dec. 13, 2006)

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT
National Capital Region
DY Int'l Bldg., 1650 San Marcelino
cor. General Malvar St., Malate, Manila

NOTICE OF FILING OF APPLICATION/S FOR ALIEN EMPLOYMENT PERMIT/S (AEP/S)

Notice is hereby given that the following companies/employers have filed with this Regional Office application/s for Alien Employment Permit/s:

Name and address of Company/Employer	Name of Foreign National	Position
AUTHENTIC CLOTHING INC. 786 Riverside Drive, Provident Village, Marikina City	Mujib Anwar Basha	President
CUMULATIVE NON-NATIVE INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE SCHOOL, INC. 8 Mayumi St., UP Village Diliman, Quezon City	Chan Woong Jung	General Manager
PHILIPPINE CULTURAL HIGH SCHOOL INC. 1253 J. Abad Santos Ave. Tondo, Manila	Shan Gao	Mandarin Language Teacher
ETIHAD AIRWAYS 27/F Tower 2, The Enterprise Center, Ayala Avenue, Makati City	Juan Torres Bona	Country Manager-Philippines
K-MOBIS MOTOR TRADING CO., INC. 30 Kabignayan St., Tatalon Quezon City	Leebong Han	General Manager
TELETECH CUSTOMER CARE MANAGEMENT PHILIPPINES INC. Bldg. F, SM Corporate Offices 1000 Bay Blvd., SM Central Business Park, Bay City, Pasay City	John G. Harrington	Account Director
MY PUMPKIN LTD. CO. 631 Sto. Cristo St., Binondo, Manila	Jinzeng Ke	Assistant Manager
OHSUNG TRAVEL & TOURS AGENCY, INC. Unit 13-8137 Plaza J. Escriva Drive Ortigas Center, Pasig City	In Kwang Cho (w/o Jung)	Finance Officer

If you have any information/objection to the abovementioned application/s please communicate with the Regional Director.

LOURDES M. TRASMONTE
Regional Director

(PDI–Dec. 13, 2006)

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Meridian E&M Trunk Card	34,950.00	6
Meridian Mail Processor Module	30,000.00	1
Voice Mail (4 ports)	263,250.00	1
SDI-DCH Card NTAK02BA	22,450.00	2
MIRAN Rls. 2 Mid. 6 Channel	29,950.00	4
M2008 Telset w/o Display	2,250.00	20
M2008 Telset with Display	4,250.00	3
M3905 Telset (Call Center)	12,950.00	24
Option 11E PBX & Software	399,950.00	1
Option 61C w/ Rls. 25.15 SW	1,859,000.00	1
Option 11 Expansion Cabinet	718,800.00	24
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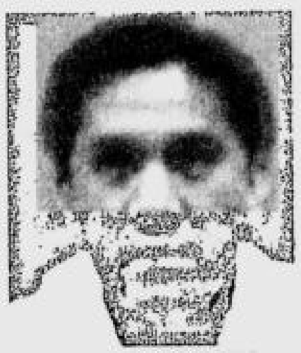
NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

RAMON R. ILUSTRE, JR.



DANILO P. DELFIN

MA. CLARIFEL H. ALONDAY

VERNA A. NOCUM

NICOLAS P. BARROS, JR.

ANA MARIE D. ALAMBRO

Notice is given to the public that the persons whose names and pictures appear herein are no longer connected with the **HUBERTUS CLAUSIUS INSURANCE & REINSURANCE BROKERS**. Any transactions entered into by them for and in behalf of the company, and any statements, whether verbal or written, issued by them as regards the company, are invalid and will not be honored.

(PDI–Dec. 13, 2006)

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P2 M, trophies at stake in search for COPS 2007

BORROMEO

A TOTAL OF P2 MILlion and 10 trophies are at stake in the Metrobank Foundation's Search for the Country's Outstanding Policemen in Service (COPS).

This was recently announced by Noel E. Bongat, chair of the current search, which has been an annual project of the Metrobank Foundation Inc. in partnership with the Rotary Club of New Manila East, Rotary International 3780 and the Philippine National Police.

The three organizations launched the 2007 Metrobank Foundation Search for the Country's Outstanding Policemen in Service in a ceremony held at the PNP headquarters in Camp Crame.

A tripartite memorandum of agreement signed by Metrobank Foundation, the Rotary Club of Manila East and the PNP highlighted the launch of the 2007 Search for the 10 COPS. Officials of the Metrobank Foundation led by its president, Aniceto M. Sobrepena, EVP Elvira Ong-Chan, Rotary Club of New Manila East president Nestor P. Borromeo and PNP Director General Oscar C. Calderon.

The 10 outstanding policemen who will be chosen will each receive a cash prize of P200,000 and a trophy from the Metrobank Foundation, Sobrepena said.

For your Classified and Obituary Ads please call:
☎ 897-8425

Helen Y. Gaisano

Has joined her husband ***John Sy Gaisano, Sr.*** *and peacefully rest in the infinite*
warmth and embrace of our Lord at the age of 78.

"A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies...
Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value.
She brings him good, not harm all the days of her life.
She is clothed with strength and dignity; She can laugh at the days to come.
She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction.
Her children and grandchildren arise and call her blessed; Her husband also...
and he praises her.
Many women do noble things...but you surpass them all.
Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; But a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised..."
- from Proverbs 31 -

She will be missed by her loving children and grandchildren...

Lowry T. Chua & Jeanne Gaisano-Chua
Lawrence Gaisano Chua & Joselyn See-Chua

John Y. Gaisano, Jr. & Joycelyn Liu-Gaisano
Johanna Liu Gaisano, John Liu Gaisano, III

Hans Y. Gaisano & Winnie Bengson-Gaisano
Juan Antonio Bengson Gaisano, Tanya Bengson Gaisano,
Luis Miguel Bengson Gaisano

Herbert Y. Gaisano & Margaret Gan-Gaisano
Gregory Gan Gaisano, Gemma Gan Gaisano,
Ginelle Gan Gaisano

Edgar C. See & Hedy Gaisano-See
Hannah Gaisano See, Johann Gaisano See

Her family will receive relatives and friends at the Sanctuario de San Antonio Parish, Forbes Park, Makati City.
On Saturday, December 16, 2006, 9:00 AM, the family will leave for the interment
at the Manila Memorial Park, Sucat, Parañaque City

"For God so loved the world, that He gave us His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have Everlasting life." —John 3:16

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Eugenio Saavedra-Araneta Sr.

of Tumaga, Zamboanga City
and Marikina City

was called home to the Lord on
December 11, 2006 at the age of 76.

He shall be missed by his dearest wife **Paz**; children **Ray & Marilen, Marilou & Raffy, Eugene & Lorna, Michael**; grandchildren **Jose Marie, Miggy, Marimil, Gelo, Julian,** and relatives.

His remains lie in state at the St. Paul of the Cross Parish Church, SSS Village, Marikina City.

Interment will be on December 14, 2006 after the 8:00 a.m. Mass at the Heaven's Gate 1, Antipolo City.

"Though I walk in the valley of darkness, I fear no evil for You are with me."

ATTY. SALVADOR RANIN

"BUDDY"

Former NBI Regional Director

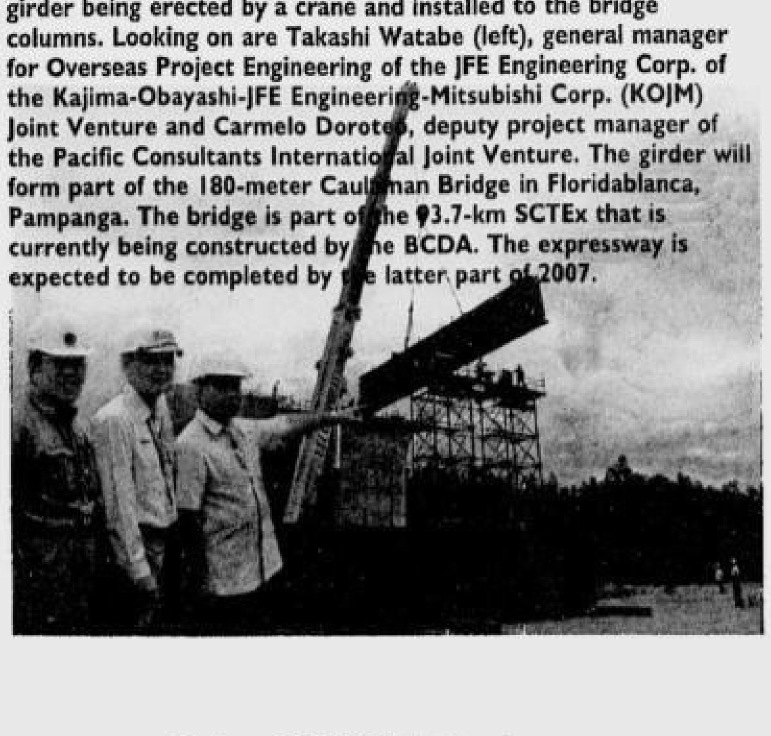
Passed away in New York City, U.S.A.
last December 6, 2006.

His bereaved wife, **Yolanda**; children **Ronald** and **Maricon** request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His body will lie in state at the NBI Chapel on December 14 & 15, and will be transferred to the Loyola Memorial Chapel, Guadalupe, Makati on Saturday, December 16.

Interment will be on Sunday, December 17, at 2:00 p.m. at the Holy Cross Memorial Park in Novaliches, Quezon City.

GIRDER ERECTION



Bases Conversion and Development Authority—Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway (BCDA-SCTEx) Program Manager for Engineering and Construction Eduardo Lena (right) points to the 30-ton giant steel girder being erected by a crane and installed to the bridge columns. Looking on are Takashi Watabe (left), general manager for Overseas Project Engineering of the JFE Engineering Corp. of the Kajima-Obayashi-JFE Engineering-Mitsubishi Corp. (KOJM) Joint Venture and Carmelo Doroteo, deputy project manager of the Pacific Consultants International Joint Venture. The girder will form part of the 180-meter Caulman Bridge in Floridablanca, Pampanga. The bridge is part of the ₱93.7-km SCTEx that is currently being constructed by the BCDA. The expressway is expected to be completed by the latter part of 2007.

VP Noli orders moratorium on housing loan payment of families affected by 'Reming'

VICE PRESIDENT NOLI "Kabayan" De Castro ordered housing agencies — Pag-IBIG Fund, Social Housing Finance Corporation, National Housing Authority, and the National Home Mortgage Finance Corporation — to impose a six-month moratorium on the payment of housing loans of members living in areas affected by recent typhoon "Reming".

The National Housing Authority (NHA) is preparing an inventory of existing resettlement sites in affected provinces which may be expanded and made available to families who lost their homes. The NHA will offer serviced lots and housing material loans.

The Pag-IBIG Fund recently waived the submission of a Barangay Certification as a requirement for calamity loan application. The declaration or proclamation issued by the Office of the President or Local Government Unit is already sufficient to support the grant of calamity loans to Pag-IBIG members of calamity-stricken areas. Under the Fund's Calamity Loan program, a qualified member whose place of residence has been declared under a State of Calamity can borrow up to 80 percent of his total savings. From January to October of this year, the Fund has released a total of P P2.87 billion in calamity loans benefiting 181,434 member-borrowers across the country.

The Social Housing Finance Corp., the housing agency administering the Community Mortgage Program (CMP), reported that as of October 2006, a cumulative total of P166 million in CMP loan was released in the Bicol region for 28 housing sites covering 5,411 beneficiaries.

It is estimated that around 69,000 families need to be relocated in the Bicol region. The relocation would require a reported budget of P5 billion from the national government.

All set for Giant Lantern Festival 2006

THIS YEAR, 12 BARANGAYS WILL attempt to bring home the championship trophy for the Giant Lantern Festival (GLF), the annual spectacle that has earned for the city worldwide fame.

Each of the 12 Barangays, GLF 2006 Committee Chair Joel David said, was given P100,000.00 as subsidy in crafting their entries for the Dec. 16 competition. The entries will come from Barangays Del Pilar, Dolores, Maimpis, San Felipe, San Jose, San Juan, San Nicolas, San Pedro, Sta. Lucia, Sto Nino, Sto Rosario and Telabastagan.

David said the City Government has released its regular subsidy of P1 million to help the barangays in shouldering the cost in making the 18-foot lanterns. Some P200,000 additional funds were also provided by the GLF committee to augment City Hall's subsidy.

This year, the GLF will be ushered in by the "Intensity G" a Globe regional Roadshow at the City proper and kick-off ceremony for the week-long Food Fair in front of the City Hall. The twin events will be held on Dec. 15.

From Dec. 17 to 20, David said, the entries will be shown in public exhibition at the Paskuhan Village in Barangay Sindalan on December 21 back to Paskuhan from December 22 to 23 and at the Metropolitan Church patio on Dec. 24.

The GLF 2006 Committee is composed of Mayor Oscar Rodriguez, Honorary Chairman, Joel David Chairman, Nestor S. Mangio, Co Chairman, Ching Pangilinan, Secretary, Agnes Romero, Treasurer, Shirley Te, Auditor and Councilor Reden Halili, PRO.

This year's sponsors include Globe Telecom, Coca-Cola, The Lakeshore, San Fernando Light and Power Company Pampanga's Best and San Miguel Corporation and SM Pampanga.

MOTORING

E-mail: pr_motoring@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Cesar D. Mangawang
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Over 80% of new vehicle owners complain of 'excessive fuel consumption'

By Tessa R. Salazar

THE JD POWER ASIA Pacific 2006 Philippines Initial Quality Study has revealed that more than half of new vehicle owners have experienced at least one problem during their first six months of ownership.

The survey was conducted independently by JD Power Asia Pacific among 1,387 individuals who purchased their vehicles from December 2005 to June 2006.

Based on the results, among the nine problem categories, ride, handling and braking accounted for the highest percentage of reported problems with 22 percent, followed by features and controls and sound system, each accounting for 13 percent. However, of the 135 problem symptoms reported, "excessive fuel consumption," emerged as the most commonly reported problem by new vehicle owners.

Anna Amador, Philippine country manager for JD Power Asia Pacific, explained to INQUIRER Motoring that the IQS (Initial Quality Study) measured vehicle quality from customer perspective, not complaints, experienced during the first two to six months of vehicle ownership. "IQS focuses on 135 problem symptoms affecting quality pertaining to 9 problem categories: ride, handling and braking; features and controls; seats; heating, ventilation and cooling (HVAC); sound system; vehicle exterior; vehicle interior; engine; and transmission," she said.

According to the press statement, while the percentage of owners reporting problems with their new vehicles increased from the 2005 study—54 percent compared to 49 percent in 2005—the number of problems reported has also increased year over year.

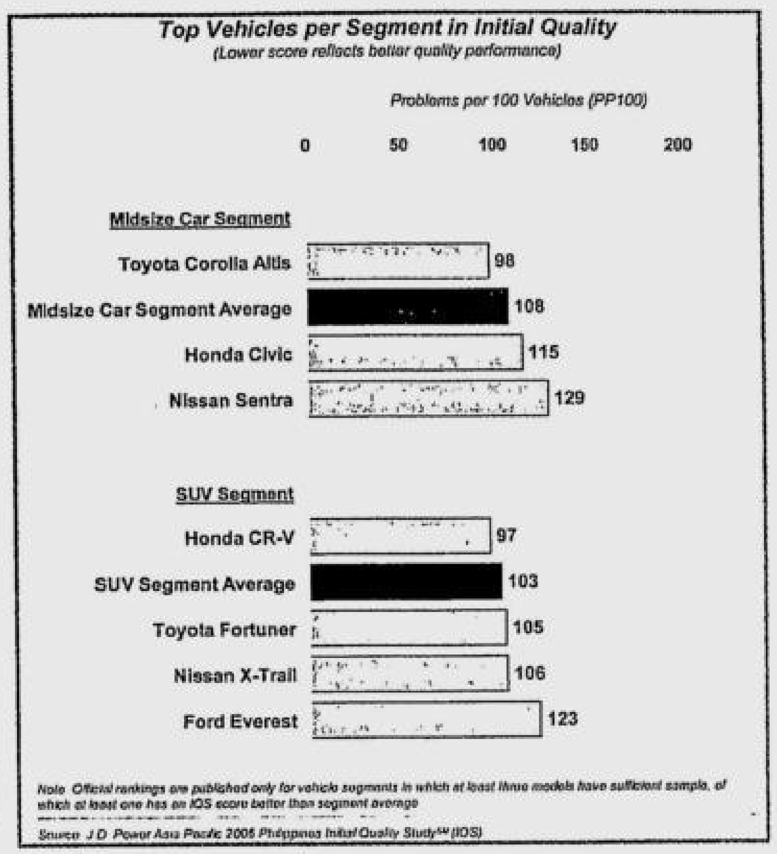
"The average initial quality score in the Philippines has increased 16 problems reported per 100 vehicles (PP100) from 2005, currently averaging 118 PP100, compared with 102 PP100 in the 2005 study," Amador revealed.

She said all problems were treated equally and overall model performance was summed up as the number of problems reported per 100 vehicles.

1.18 problems per vehicle

"Initial quality which is measured by PP100 is simply the average number of problems reported per 100 vehicles. In the statement above, we mentioned that the average initial quality score in the Philippines this year is 118 PP100. Simply put, this means that per vehicle, customers experience an average of 1.18 problems this year, compared to only 1.02 problems in 2005, Amador said.

When asked about the unique aspects that can be found in the Philippine survey, Amador replied that for two consecutive years, JD Power has seen "excessive fuel consumption" emerging as the most commonly reported problem in the Philippines.



Note Official rankings are published only for vehicle segments in which at least three models have sufficient sample, of which at least one has an IQS score better than segment average

Source J D Power Asia Pacific 2006 Philippines Initial Quality Study℠ (IQS)

> Elder people are more tolerant about vehicle quality

"This could be a consequence of the increase in fuel prices in the country. In addition, the study finds that more than 80 percent of vehicle owners feel their vehicles consume fuel excessively during stop/go driving. This type of driving condition is especially common in Manila where traffic congestion is a daily occurrence," she said.

Change in model mix

On the possibility that the car complaints had increased because of the increasing number of car owners, Amador explained that the change in model mix this year has contributed to the increase in the number of problems reported.

"Some of the new models (newly launched) register fairly high reported problems. There are also some models which underwent minor changes or added new variants in their existing lineup which have recorded initial quality scores worse than last year," she stressed.

As for age groupings, JD Power Asia Pacific noted that in general, "elder people are more tolerant about vehicle quality" but that "the difference by age is not significant."

Info on vehicle problems

JD Power conducts and publishes the results of the study in order to provide the public and manufacturers with information on vehicle problems experienced by customers with their respective vehicles.

Aside from this, JD Power delivers a comprehensive report that contains detailed information collected from the study to automotive OEM clients.

"We believe our clients utilize the VOC (Voice of the Customer) information to improve vehicle quality. The study is not designed to address each specific case of problems. The primary objective of the study is to provide benchmark information of vehicle quality," said Amador.

Amador also explained that it is JD Power's standard policy to release only segments with "rankable" models. In order to be included in the ranking, a minimum of three models with sufficient sample size are needed within a segment. This year, only the midsize segment and SUVs had at least three models eligible to be ranked.

In addition, JD Power does not compare figures compiled in the Philippines with those gathered from neighboring Asian countries such as Thailand or Vietnam. A direct comparison of IQS scores across countries is not recommended, since actual vehicle usage and

OVER/B13

Isuzu updates models for 2007

By Charles E. Buban

IT WAS A SHOW OF FORCE FOR Isuzu Philippines Corp. when it recently treated shoppers of SM Mall of Asia in Pasay City to an exhibit of its latest models as well as the company's advances in diesel engine technology.

"This was IPC's biggest car show to date and we are pleased with the response. For the first time, the public was able to see up close the latest version of the Alterra sport utility vehicle (SUV) and the Crosswind Asian utility vehicle (AUV) as well as their respective variants," said Timmy Naval, IPC public relations manager.

Naval said the week-long exhibit (that ended Dec. 6) was a perfect staging place to unveil the updated version of Isuzu's flagship model, the 2007 Alterra.

Best SUV for 2006

"Being voted as the Best SUV in last year's Auto Focus People's Choice Automobile of the Year Awards, the company decided to update the Alterra in a way that would further boost the image of its owner," explained Naval.

Indeed, IPC afforded the 2007 Alterra with features and appointments previously only seen on much more expensive full-size luxury SUVs.

The 2007 Alterra (with price ranging from P1.475 million for the 4x2 manual variant to P1.668 million for the 4x4 automatic variant) features four notable exterior updates: chrome radiator grille with a six-hole design and fin inserts, projector-type headlamps, circular fog lamps, and new rear chrome license plate garnish.

THE FESTIVE mood inside SM Mall of Asia is further enhanced by the display of IPC's latest vehicle models.

Fresh interior updates

"Inside, IPC also gave the 2007 Alterra fresh design updates including the Optitron instrument panel that displays ambient temperature, average fuel consumption, and odometer and trip meter readings (an easy-to-read digital gear indicator is available in the automatic variant), newly designed wood panel as well as a new light café leather seat. Two 7-inch wide-screen monitors with tilting function are available for those seated at the second or third row seats of the new Alterra," enumerated Ronald Baladad, IPC public relations supervisor.

The Alterra is joined by another updated Isuzu model, the 2007 Crosswind Sportivo.

The company's bet in the AUV category now sports a restyled front grille, fog lamps, luxurious Alcantara leathers seats, 15-inch high-gloss chrome wheels.

"The top-of-the-line Sportivo (priced P1.135 million for the automatic and P1.070 million for the manual), now features a backing camera (located under the vehicle's rear spoiler and whose images are sent to a 3-inch LCD monitor located on the dashboard) that adds safety when the vehicle is doing reverse maneuvers," explained Baladad.

Other Isuzu models

Aside from the two models and their variants, the event also displayed a cutaway model of the current Alterra, D-Max pickups and its passenger vehicle variant that seats 15 passengers, NHR passenger van that seats 17 as well as different diesel engine models for jeepneys, AUVs and auto repowering, light boats, fishing vessels and yachts.

"Apart from being a leading manufacturer of top performing diesel-fed SUVs and commercial vehicles, we also want to inform the public that Isuzu also leads in the development of diesel engine for various applications," Baladad said.

In fact, he added that Isuzu is also in the process of developing next-generation, ultra-clean diesel engines that would exceeds stringent exhaust emissions standards around the world and put such low emissions powerplants in the same league as future environment-friendly gasoline engines.

MARKS & SPENCER

TAKING the centerstage in last week's exhibition is IPC's flagship model, the 2007 Alterra SUV.

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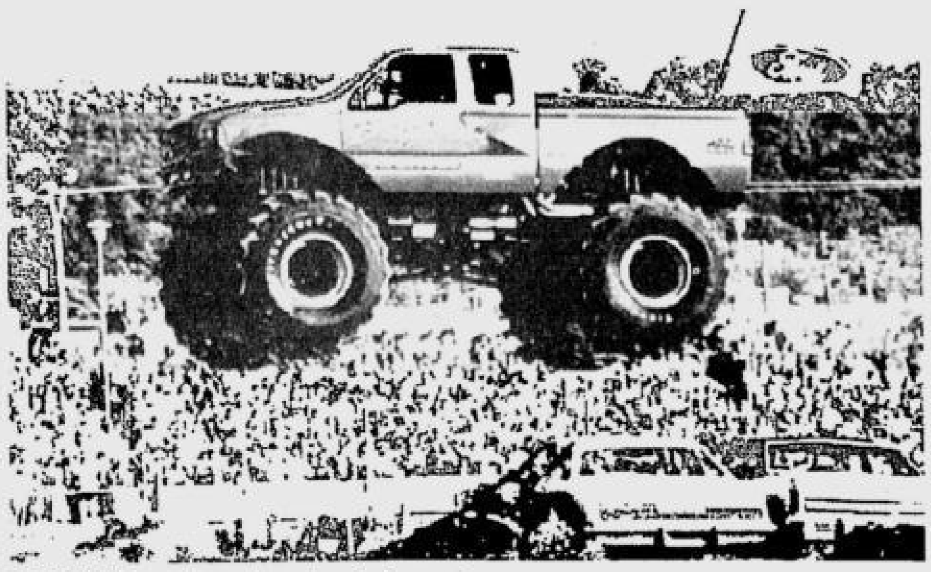
Monster truck madness



MONSTER trucks are jumping their way to success.

ON THE ROAD

Aida Sevilla-Mendoza

YEEE HAAAA! MONSTER TRUCKS ARE beginning to attract crowds in Europe, burning tread, smashing bumpers, crushing, splattering and jumping their way to success.

Monster trucks are big, garishly painted, extremely loud, powerful pickup trucks on huge chassis and tractor-size wheels that star in a uniquely American form of entertainment, monster jamborees. In North America, 3.5-million tickets are sold annually to fans of monster jams and now, a recent Wall Street Journal article reports, they are becoming a hit in Western Europe with new arenas in places like Paris, Hamburg, Helsinki and Prague.

Bubba

The ultimate in American Bubba entertainment, monster jams feature monster trucks roaring and racing around dirt-track stadiums, then bouncing over and crushing rows of old cars while spectators cheer. Afterward, the driver usually jumps on a crushed car and sprays it with a bottle of beer. During the half-time intermission, motorcycle riders perform free-style motocross stunts such as somersaults and jumps.

Monster trucks are literally American gladiators (in fact, "American Gladiators" is a hit television series) with names like Maximum Destruction, Grave Digger, Summit Bigfoot, Public Disturbance, Sudden Impact, Predator, Dragon Slayer, Nasty Boy, Bulldozer, Bulletproof, Iron Warrior and Executioner.

Rural roots

Monster trucks trace their roots to rural America, where drivers in the 1970s began modifying their pickup trucks with 48-inch diameter tires to better compete in off-road contests like "mud-bogging" (driving your truck through mud) and truck pulling. Soon they were using bigger tires and finally, the idea of driving the trucks over rows of old cars came up. In this way a new, goofy if outrageous form of American redneck entertainment began.

Before the first monster jam in Paris last October, Live Nation Inc., the California-based promoter of the show, hosted a pre-show pit party where the public could inspect the trucks and chat with the drivers. But due to the language barrier, the drivers were reduced to motioning and smiling encouragement so that the shy Parisians would examine their trucks.

Third tour

The monster truck tour recently completed its third year in Europe after expanding to nine cities from three in 2004. Live Nation executives said they first tried setting up a European tour in 2001 but were turned away by arena managers who thought monster jams were too American and would offend European sensibilities.

At that time, anything identifiably American was unwelcome because the debate leading up to the US-led invasion of Iraq was tarnishing America's reputation in France and much of Europe. By 2004, however, the company had managed to book shows in Finland, Belgium and Sweden, where cross-country motorcycle races and other motor sports have long been popular. Tickets to the first monster jam in Paris cost $44 for adults and $22 for kids. This year, Live Nation sold 50,000 tickets in the Netherlands.

Monster jams, by the way, are not the only events involving monster trucks. There are monster truck motor sport events and there is a World Monster Truck Racing League.

Spectacle

The successful intro of monster jams in Europe makes one wonder whether they would be also profitable in Asia. Would the spectacle of big trucks crushing old cars while people roar their approval offend Asian sensibilities? Apparent European acceptance of a wild, barbaric show like the monster jam may surprise some, given the centuries-old traditions and refined culture of the Continent. But then, the WSJ article does mention that the young sons of Europeans are the ones eagerly embracing monster truck mania.

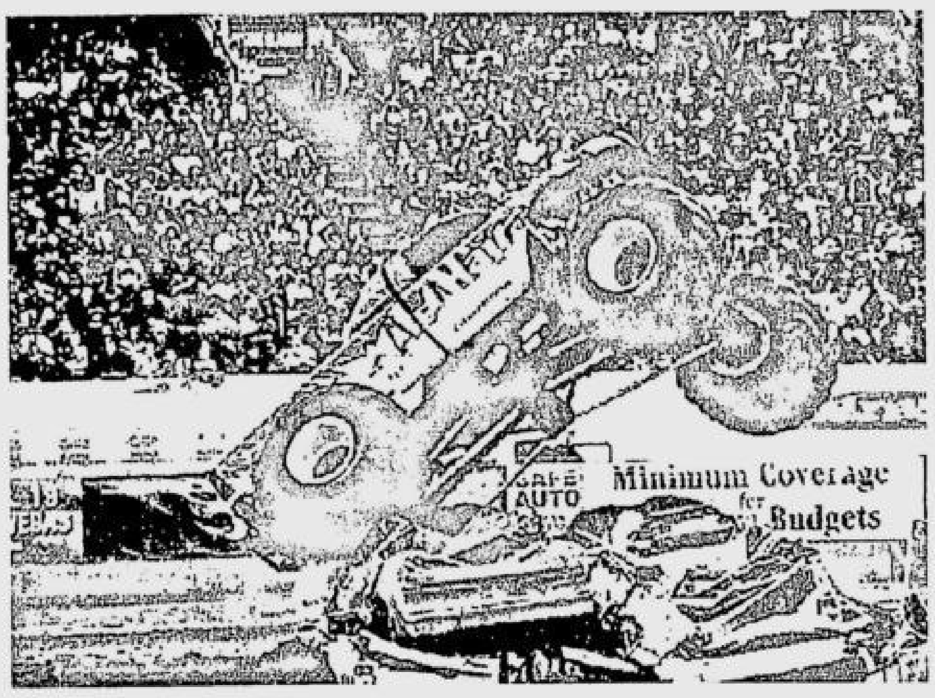
I can imagine the monster truck tour coming over from California to the Philippines, a former US colony where touring American shows are always welcome. But I can't imagine people in this Third World country paying the equivalent of $44 in pesos just to watch old cars being stomped and wrecked by monster trucks. We save and still use old cars, don't we?

* * *

TODAY'S BUMPER STICKER: We are able to walk on air, but only as long as our illusions support us. (E.L. Doctorow)

* * *

E-mail comments to aida_sevilla@yahoo.com.



A MONSTER truck in action

The Grand Vitara and the legend of Tajima

MY DRIFT

Andre Palma

I WISH I WERE NOBUHIRO TAJIMA. Not only would I be an immensely better driver than I currently am but I would also have one of the most deserved and colorful nicknames in the rallying world, that of "Monster."

The larger than life Tajima officially earned his nickname from his "superb wild driving style," this according to the official Suzuki Sport press information. Add to this the fact that he is a large man, not only by Japanese standards, and you can see how I can feel some affinity for this man who is admittedly one of the best hill climb and rally drivers in the world.

His is a name that is synonymous with the sporting heritage of Suzuki automobiles. For over 30 years, Monster has been driving Suzuki's to winning finishes on Group A WRC events in the United States and Australia, the "Race to the Sky" Hill Climb in New Zealand and the world-famous Pike's Peak International Hill Climb.

Weaving a legend

One of my driving heroes, Monster Tajima has made a living weaving a legend about himself and the capabilities of cars with the Suzuki marque. It is predictable therefore that while test driving the current model Suzuki Grand Vitara, moments straight out of Thurber's "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" were fairly commonplace.

Sadly, the Grand Vitara is no race prepped rig though; in fact it is rather unhurried in the 2.0-liter version with the automatic transmission. Even with the power switch flipped on and glowing, this compact soft roader is hard pressed to jump past triple digit speed even just on the slight gradient going up to Tagaytay via Sta. Rosa.

Ability from 30 kph to 80 kph is another story altogether, as the engine's 145 bhp and 193 Nm of torque is well evident in this range, even with the automatic transmission. Imagine what the manual gearbox can be made to do or the 2.7-liter V6 automatic with 185 bhp and 250 Nm of pull.

Plus factors

Surprising about the Grand Vitara is the chassis behavior and its road-holding ability. The monocoque is pleasantly stiff probably due to the fact that an integrated ladder frame helps reinforce the vehicle's body. While not class leading, dynamics when turning the Vitara at speed are sharper than most vehicles of the same genre. The suspension is not softy sprung to placate those seeking a plush, supple ride. It is taut enough to provide just the right amount of feedback in driving situations closer to the raggedy edge.

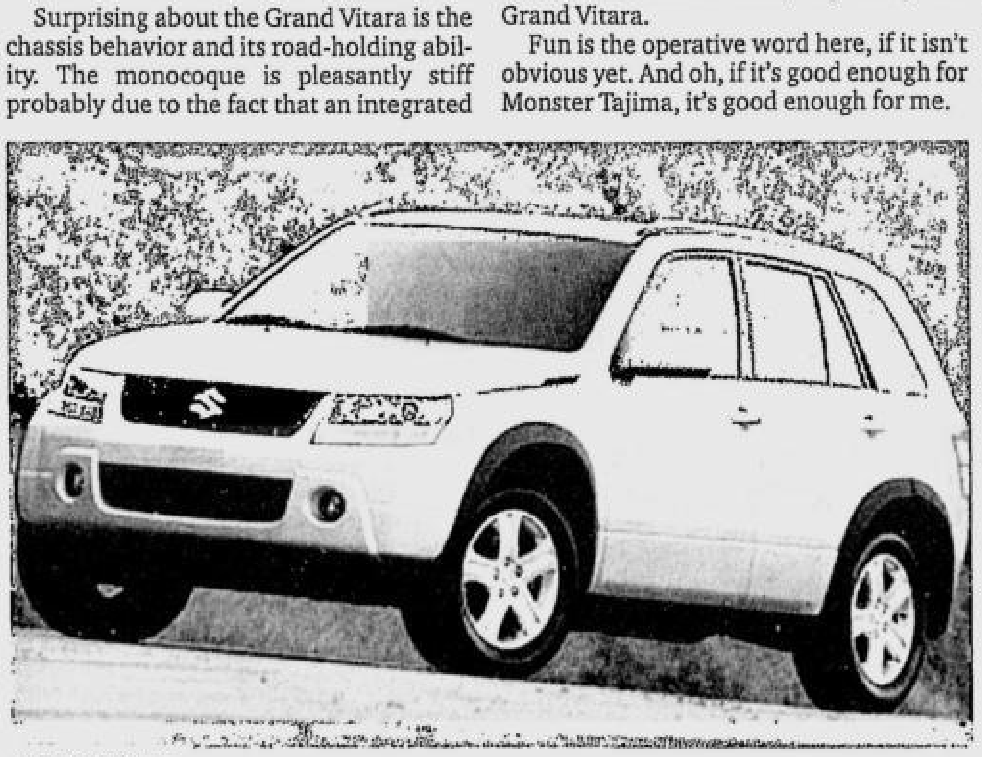
The interior is inoffensive and very straightforward, done in a plastic and fabric trim that hints of utility, efficiency and Japanese sporting intent. Interior cabin space is decent and can be made to accept more volume with the availability of split folding rear seats.

As with all cars in the real world, the list of plus factors have to give in to the minuses at some point and the Grand Vitara has its fair share of reality checks. The brakes could afford more positive feedback when engaged. It was difficult to modulate braking down from speed. The gated shifter, while a plus factor in the cabin's style points, proved to be notchy from the D (drive) position to the other gears. Noise also comes from the rear differential when accelerating aggressively, uphill, in one of the lower gears. Gas consumption is also quite on the thirsty side but that is already a given when one pushes as hard as one is able to do in the Vitara.

Overall assessment

The foreign press has released the overall assessment of the current crop of Suzuki automobiles so well. The handling, drivability and overall packaging of these cars hail back from a golden age for Japanese manufacturers where both spirited and practical vehicles were the norm. This may have its drawbacks, like the lack of cutting-edge technology, but the advantages are obvious when one gets some mileage in one of Suzuki's cars, especially the Grand Vitara.

Fun is the operative word here, if it isn't obvious yet. And oh, if it's good enough for Monster Tajima, it's good enough for me.



GRAND Vitara

Numbered days for 1.3-M unregistered motor vehicles

TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF THE 1.3-million unrenewed vehicles plying the streets nationwide, newly installed Land Transportation Office chief, Assistant Secretary Reynaldo Berroya announced in a press conference that the LTO has implemented a program, which he foresees, would greatly diminish the number of unrenewed vehicles roaming around.

Dubbed "Oplan Balik rehistro," the nationwide activity will focus on an information awareness campaign to convince motorists to renew the registration of their vehicles coupled with a simultaneously and massive enforcement drive.

Substantial discounts

Under the program, motorists who voluntarily renew the registration of their unrenewed vehicles will have substantial discounts on applied fines. For example if the registration of a vehicle has been unrenewed since the year 2003, all the motorist will pay for are the fines for the year 2005 and 2006 plus a 50 percent penalty for the year 2006. On the other hand, if the vehicle is apprehended, the motorist will have to pay the fines for 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006 plus a 50 percent penalty for every year of unrenewal.

Other incentives are also being offered and these will be announced as the program progresses. Motorists who have long standing unrenewals are urged to avail of this voluntary renewal program of the LTO or face apprehension, car seizure or impoundment.

Berroya said that on the road are almost 1.3-million vehicles the registration of which are unrenewed. The biggest segment of motor vehicles with unrenewed registration is the motorcycles, eating up 68 percent of roughly 890,000 unrenewed motorcycles. This is followed by the UV/SUV category which take 19 percent or a round total of 280,000 vehicles. Cars take up 7 percent or a total of 90,398 while trucks and buses trail with 5 percent and 1 percent, respectively. Based on these figures, the government loses P300-400 million in yearly revenues.

BERROYA

Apprehension campaign

Berroya also announced that simultaneous to "Oplan Balik Rehistro" will be the implementation of a massive apprehension campaign.

Relative to the "Oplan Balik Rehistro" program, Berroya added that LTO apprehending officers are now provided with mobile handheld and GPRS capable devices which interface between the apprehending officer and the LTO database for efficient and fast data verification, meaning to say that LTO officers can on the spot verify whether a motor vehicle has past and pending violations and hence LTO traffic enforcers can now spend more time apprehending violators rather than verifying records.

MOTORSCOPE

Kia holds soiree for bankers

COLUMBIAN AUTOCAR CORP., MANUFACTURER AND DISTRIBUTOR OF KIA IN THE PHILIPPINES, RECENTLY TREATED ITS banker-friends to an evening soiree at its flagship dealer's plush pub and lounge along Quezon Avenue. This is in a bid to strenghten its foothold in the local automotive industry.

Kia Motors Quezon Avenue, one of global Kia's outstanding dealerships in 2005, played host for the evening, treating CAC's reliable bankers to an open bar and a sumptuous feast of meat and seafood assortment.

Kia Motors, ranked sixth among global car manufacturers and today the fastest-growing automaker in the world, has made a bid to the top five by 2010. The equally aggressive local marketing push is seen as part of the global effort to realize this goal.

Bankers feted in the KMQA soiree include Alex Soliman, senior vice president for auto loan, AMA Savings Bank; Jojo Victor and Alvin Del Rosario, manager and assistant manager for auto loan, respectively, Banco de Oro; Tony Peña, VP-head, auto loan, BdO; Ramon Paraiso, first vice president, RCBC Savings Bank; and Jess Custodio, VP-head, auto loan, PS Bank. Also present during the affair were Markane Gobo, VP for operations, Kia Cebu; Bobby Ang, VP and general manager, Kia Davao; and Marcosito Martinez, president, Kia Quirino.

Over 80% of new vehicle . . .

From page B12

vehicle driving environment would be different across countries.

Further improving operations

Elizabeth Lee, president of the Chamber of Automotive Manufacturers of the Philippines Inc. (Campi), said that the same survey conducted in Indonesia has shown an increase in vehicle problems, while the Thailand survey has shown a decline.

"Surveys are one of many tools used to benchmark further improvements in operations. The PHI domestic auto assemblers shares the same conviction in continuous improvement with the "Kaizen" philosophy and method ingrained in the daily operations of the assembly plants when it comes to producing vehicles to serve the high standards of the Filipino buyer. It is the basic requirement to maintain, sustain and increase one's competitiveness," Lee told the INQUIRER.

Waiting time

"We received the news with a lot of sadness. However, we recognize that these are the voices of our customers. We are aware that while the survey was being conducted, we had two to three months of waiting time to deliver the new Civic to customers and this has affected the satisfaction rating of our customers," said Arnel Doria, deputy head for marketing of Honda Cars Philippines.

"Also, we recognize the other factors that have contributed to the dissatisfaction of our customers. We are committed, however, to study in detail the results of the survey so that we may be able to address the needs of our customers. In so doing, everyone in Honda, including our dealerships, vow to improve our customer satisfaction rating in 2007," he added.

Toyota Motors Philippines vice president for vehicle sales Raymond Rodriguez said the company continuously does its best to improve the quality of its products in line with its corporate philosophy moving forward to help customers get more out of life.

Strong performance

Ford Philippines, for its part, released a statement saying that the results of the survey were an indication of the strong performance of Ford vehicles in the market.

Ford said that it has received the highest rank in Sales Satisfaction Index Study (SSI) with its new vehicle sales and delivery process, Ford and Mazda received the second highest rank in the Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) with its authorized dealer after sales service in the Philippines, and recently the Ford Everest was included in the top five vehicles in the Initial Quality Study (IQS).

Mirant sale vote of confidence, GMA says

Entry of investors seen calming fears of power shortage

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARroyo yesterday cheered the successful sale of Mirant Corp.'s power plants in the country to a Japanese consortium for $3.4 billion as a vote of confidence in the Philippine economy.

"The Philippines welcomes the sale of Mirant assets to a consortium led by Tokyo Electric Power Co. and Marubeni Corp. of Japan. This is the peak of business confidence and is clear proof that we are on the runway to economic takeoff on the back of growing political stability," said President Arroyo in a statement.

"Our tough economic decisions have driven investor confidence to the peak and this will continue to break the back of poverty and provide a windfall of jobs and grassroots enterprise," she added.

The President said the sale should calm fears of a power shortage in Luzon.

"This sale seals the stability of electric power in the Luzon area for the long term. I would like to thank Mirant for being a superb corporate citizen of our country and I welcome our Japanese investors as true allies for progress and prosperity," said the President.

The President noted that Tokyo Power and Marubeni's investment was fresh on the heels of the visit of Japan Prime Minister Shinzo Abe who committed to increase his country's foreign aid and investments to the Philippines.

The sale of the assets to Marubeni and Tokyo Electric marks the biggest acquisition in the Philippines, according to market-data provider Dealogic Inc.

Previously, the biggest acquisition was the $2.7-billion (euro2 billion) purchase of Coca-Cola Bottlers Philippines Inc. by Australia's Coca-Cola Amatil Ltd. in 1997.

Marubeni and Tokyo Electric Power Co., Japan's largest power company, will each buy a 50 percent stake in Mirant Asia Pacific, the biggest independent power producer in the Philippines with total power-generating capacity of 2,203 megawatts.

As part of its power sector reform, the Philippines has been trying to privatize the power generation and transmission assets of state utility National Power Corp.

But the effort has so far resulted in the sale of a handful of power plants. The government attempted and failed at least three times to sell the transmission assets valued at US$2.6 billion (euro1.9 billion). *With a report from AP*

Gov't urges foreign firms to invest in power sector

By Abigail L. Ho

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY HAS URGED foreign power sector giants who were interested in the auction for Mirant Philippines Corp. to consider investing in other plants up for sale.

Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla said those who went after Atlanta-based Mirant Corp.'s Philippine assets were "very well qualified in every respect" to participate in the development of the local power sector.

Tokyo Electric Power Co. and Marubeni Corp. of Japan won the bid for Mirant Philippines with their bid of $3.42 billion.

Lotilla described Marubeni as "an old hand in the Philippines, doing business here since 1909."

Tepco, on the other hand, was a welcome addition to the Philippine power sector as it was a well established energy company in Japan, he said.

"We welcome the confidence shown in the Philippines by well known and highly experienced Japanese energy companies through their purchase of Mirant's power businesses in Luzon. The country undoubtedly had gained through the entry of a set of internationally recognized participants in the Philippine energy sector," he said.

"While the sale is essentially a private business transaction, we are confident that the Japanese consortium is financially and technically qualified to perform its contractual obligations to National Power Corp.," he added.

The Marubeni-Tepco joint venture edged out the only other bidder for Mirant Philippines—the venture between Malaysia's Tanjong Plc and OneEnergy, a partnership between Hong Kong's CLP Holdings and Japan's Mitsubishi Corp.

Mirant currently owns and operates the 1,200-MW Sual and the 735-MW Pagbilao coal-fired power plants in Pangasinan and Quezon, respectively. It also holds a 20-percent stake in the Ilijan power facility.

Auto parts firms to build RP car

By Ronnel W. Domingo

AT LEAST 130 AUTO PARTS MAKERS YESTERday announced they were building a prototype of their proposed Philippine Utility Vehicle, aimed at reviving a People's Car program.

They expect to complete the prototype by the first quarter next year.

Eddie Jose, president of the Motor Vehicle Parts Manufacturers Association of the Philippines, said the groups' board had already approved the product concept and the preliminary designs of the multi-purpose PhUV.

"It is going to be a diesel-powered (Asian utility vehicle) designed to carry both passengers and cargo," Jose said. "It is thus ideal for business use on weekdays and family use on weekends."

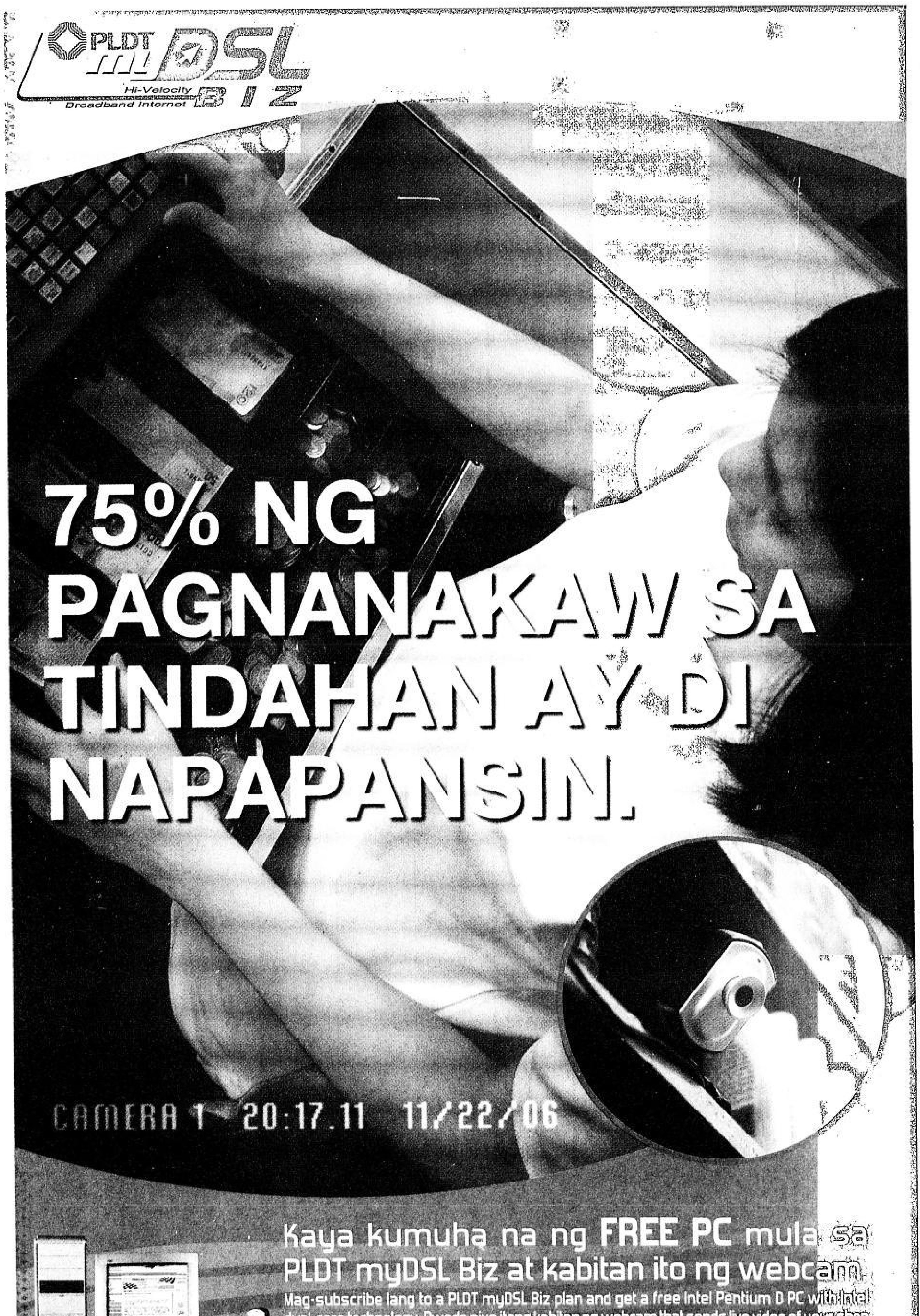
MVPMAP has been pushing for "a brand-new AUV built from completely knocked down (CKD) kits at the price of a used car but with a high level of value-added local parts."

MVPMAP said the PhUV may be priced at about P350,000 a unit and it expects sales to reach 30,000 units during the first year.

"(This collaboration is) an unprecedented show of unity and support (among parts makers) and we want to prove that big volume of value-added parts can be produced locally and that an AUV can be manufactured at the target price," Jose said.

He added that MVPMAP members were currently contributing whatever local parts that they produce to complete the prototype unit, which would mean the result would have high level of local value-added content.

"This is (the companies' way of) showing concern for the industry that is threatened by a declining volume of vehicles produced from CKD kits," he said.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LIFESTYLE

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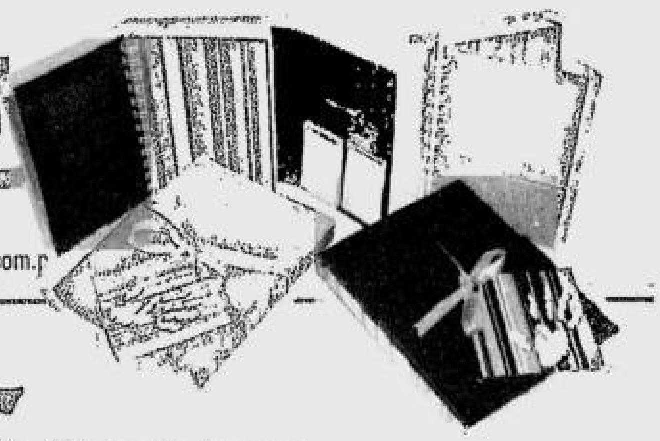
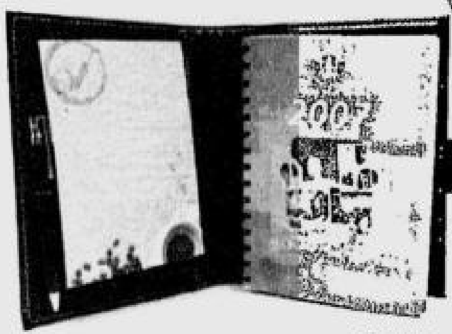


Christmas *Part two*
CATALOGUE 2006

Thousand Bears for Bicol
Love Conquers Fear



RYAN LIM

Switchrings. Stylish laptop sleeves. Funny shirts. A pixel playmate. Hot gadgets. Makeup and more makeup. Gifts with a heart.

Your personal Christmas shoppers have continued to scour the city (and again, cyberspace) for awesome present ideas. This week's gift guide is packed with so many great finds you'd want for your loved ones and for yourselves, too.

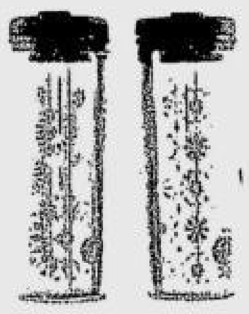
Our work here is done.

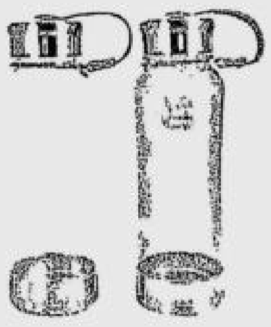
Now we can start with our own Christmas shopping.

2bU GIFT GUIDE

By Pam Pastor

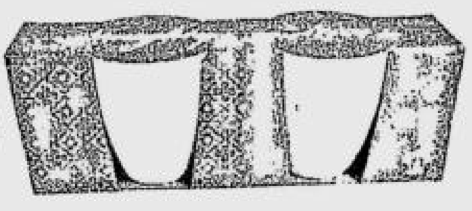
FOR THE COFFEE ADDICT

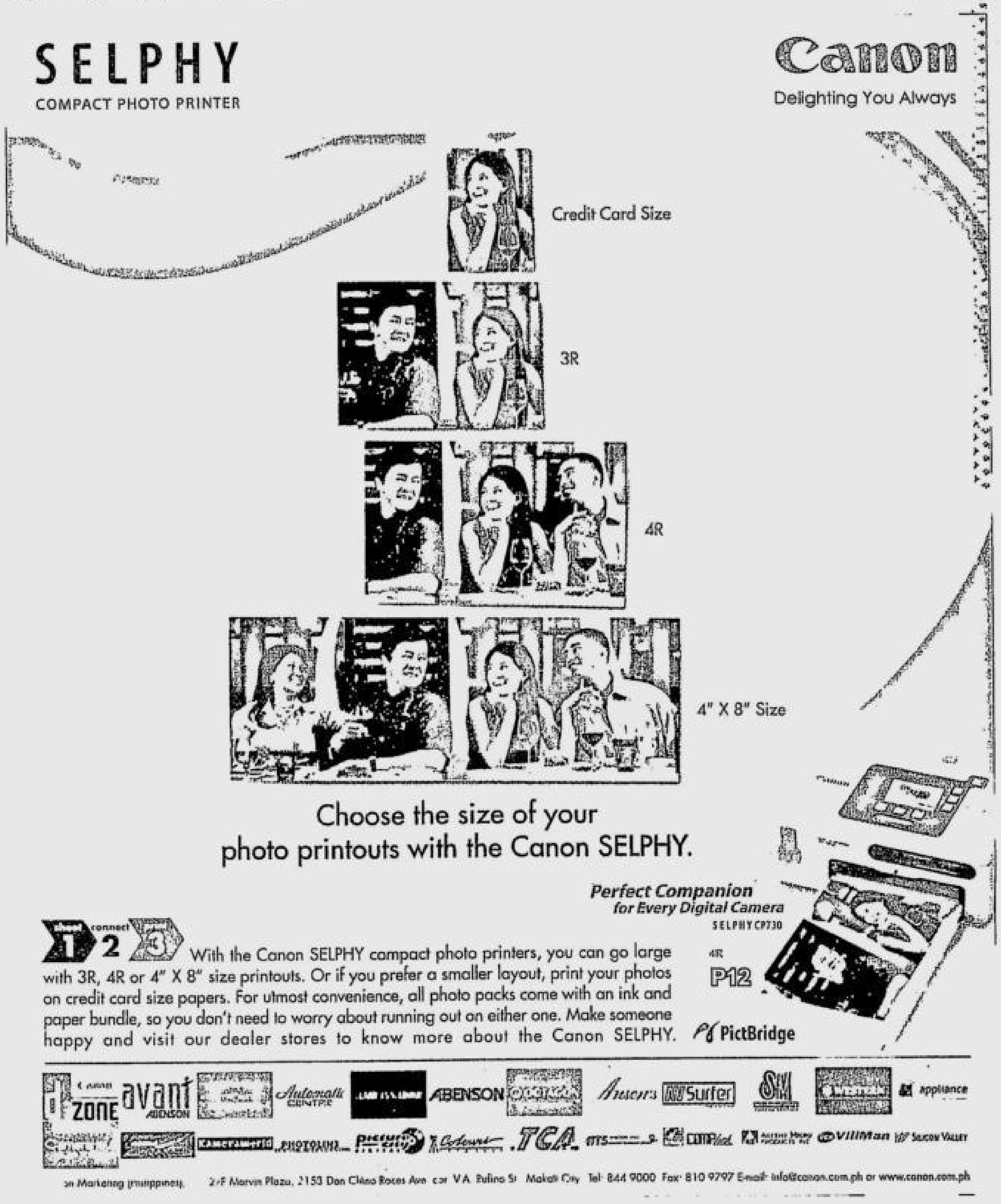




If your friend considers Starbucks his second home, it might be a good idea to give him gifts that will remind him of his favorite place. This season's gift offerings include an adorable Candy Cane Mug, a Red Cup Designed Tumbler, Christmas Frosted Tumblers, Marilyn Stainless Steel Thermal Bullet Bottles, New Acrylic Bottle Water with Cap, Bearista Bear Magnets, Six For the Season Gift Packs and Starbucks Tradition Packs.

If you're feeling extra-generous, give your loved one the 2007 Starbucks Planner. This year's planner is a beauty—and it comes with a leather case, a notepad and a pen. Nothing says "I love you" more than your willingness to drink 21 cups of coffee to get this gift for your *amour*. Visit your favorite Starbucks branch.

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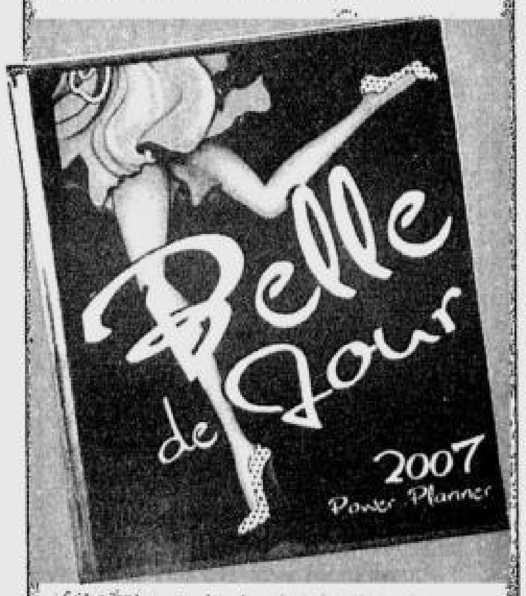
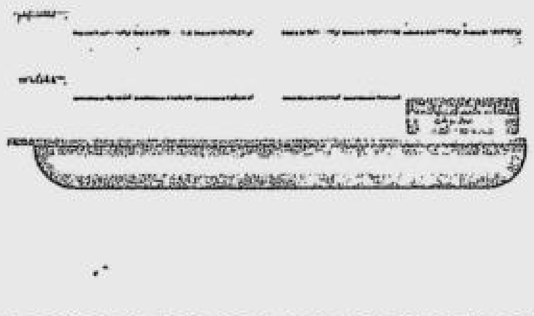
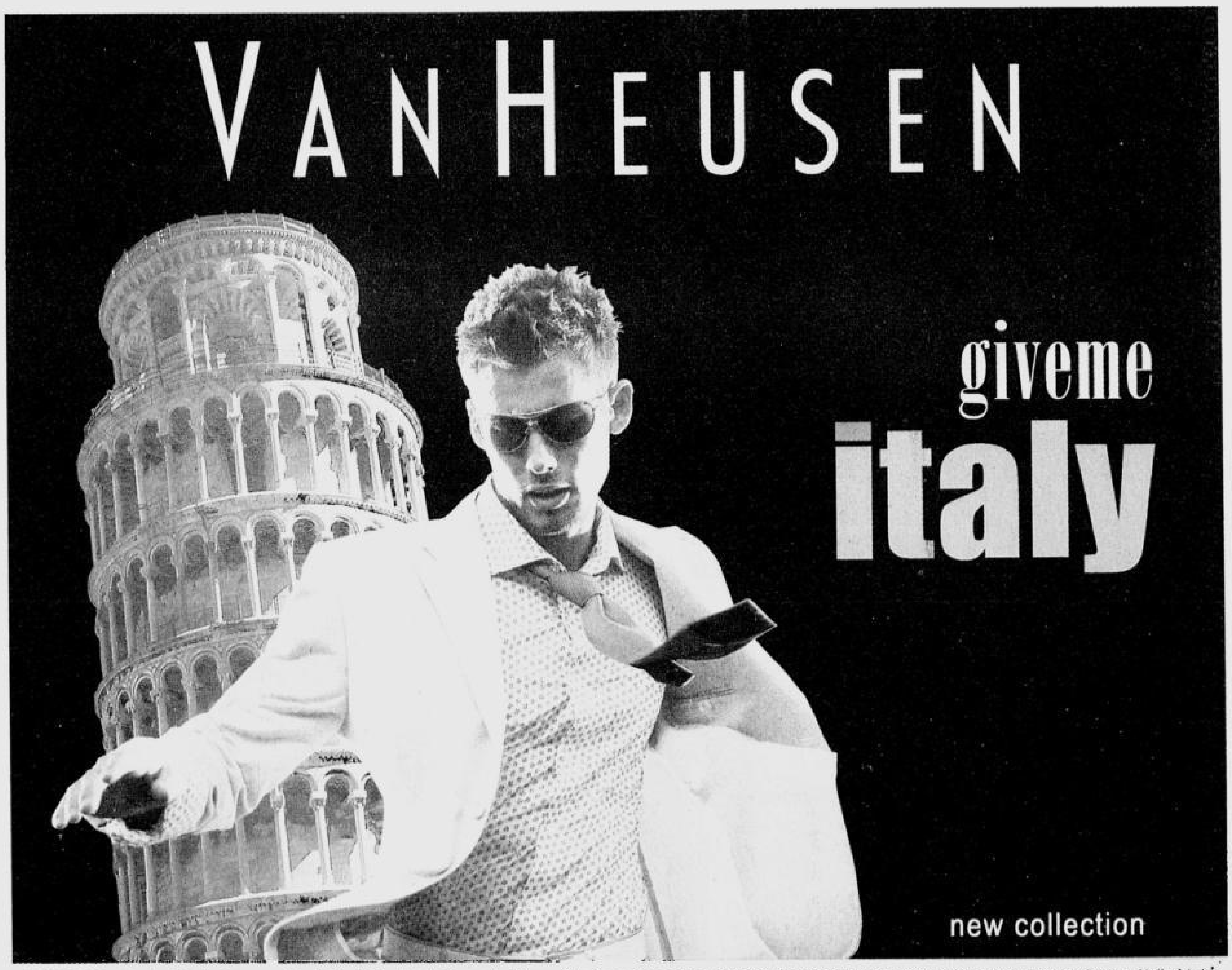
FOR THE BUSY SHOPAHOLIC



The Belle De Jour 2007 planner is not just a planner. It will not only help your busy shopaholic friend plan her year, it's also packed with articles, illustrations and hot self-improvement tips. Each planner is also loaded with discount coupons from places like All Flip Flops, Chocolate Clothing Co., The Ramp at Crossings, Haya, Jack's Loft, Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf and The Spa. Pick up the Belle De Jour planner at Crossings Department Store's The Ramp and selected PowerBooks and National Book Store branches for P480.

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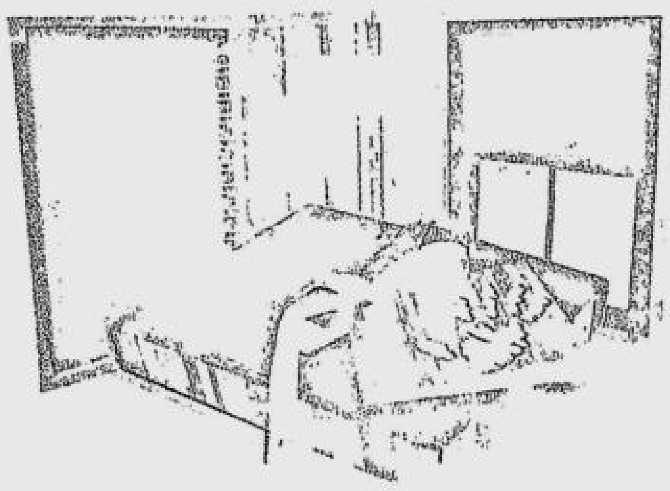
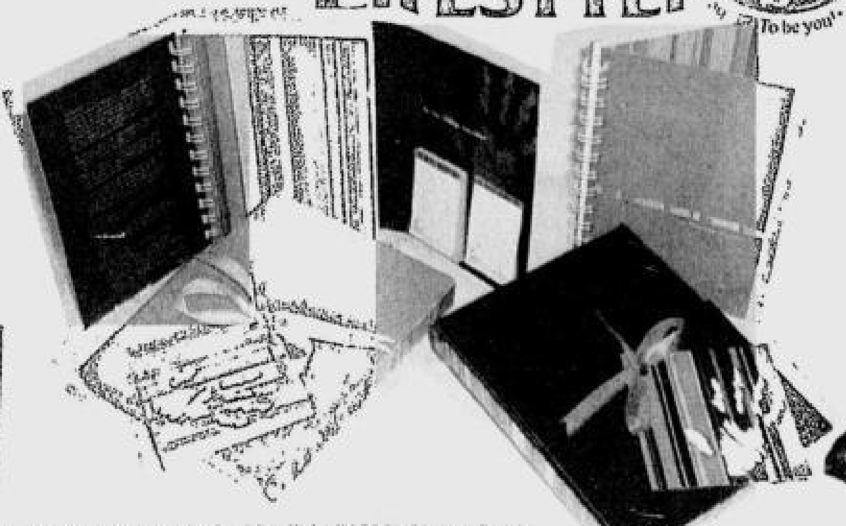
2BU GIFT GUIDE

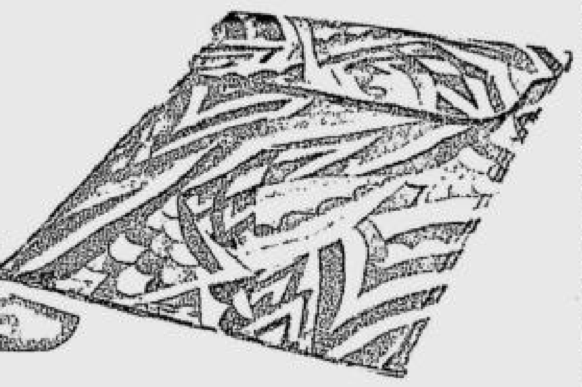
FOR THE DISSATISFIED EMPLOYEE





Every year, Hands On Manila's (HOM) Giving Guide is always a priority in our gift guide. And why not? Few things top a gift that can act as your manual in making a difference in other people's lives. This year, aside from the Giving Guide, Hands On Manila is also offering beautiful notebooks that include an HOM backgrounder, a calendar, project themes, monthly schedules and special post-its. Each notebook is imprinted with an important message "Be the change. Volunteer." Call 8435231 or 8437044; or e-mail info@handsonmanila.org.

FOR THE LAPTOP LOVER



Every laptop owner knows this: finding stylish and durable laptop sleeves can be really hard. Thanks to Junkies, the brand started by Miguel Aranaz (yes, the brother of Amina), the search is over. Miguel, a self-confessed Mac junkie, says that his business choice shouldn't be a surprise. "It runs in the family." And the laptop sleeves, which will be available this week, are just the start. He's planning to come out with more functional bags. Junkies' laptop sleeves are padded for extra protection. It will soon be available at Hush, SM Mall of Asia. To pre-order, visit http://thejunkies.multiply.com or e-mail theeverydayjunkie@yahoo.com.

FOR THE CHILDREN OF BICOL

Thousand Bears for Bicol

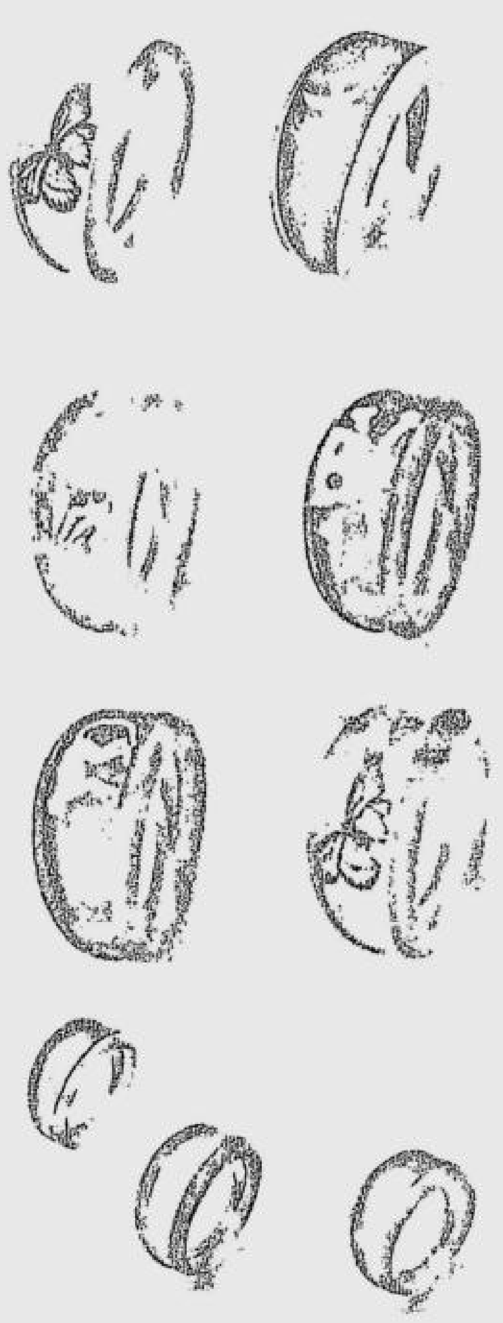
After the devastations caused by typhoons in Bicol, Cathy Babao Guballa wrote [illegible]: "My heart bleeds for all [illegible] young children who have recently lost their homes [illegible] perhaps, their parents [illegible] provided them strength and security. How can they ever feel safe now?"

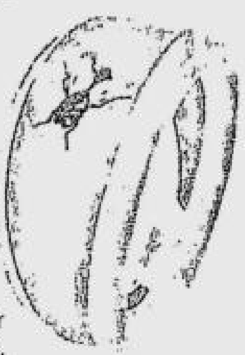
Then she had a brilliant idea. Because toys are known to be effective tools in helping children cope with loss and trauma, she has decided to bring stuffed toys to the children of Bicol. She is now collecting friendly-looking teddy bears that are new or in good condition from friends and strangers for a project called "A Thousand Bears for Bicol" (TBB). The campaign tagline [illegible] Moon, the mascot [illegible] TBB [illegible] was designed by [illegible].

TBB has raised [illegible] 100 bears [illegible] waiting for more bears to come.

Spread love this Christmas by sending bears to the children of Bicol. You may send your bears at [illegible] Milkyway Drive Blue Ridge QC (Tel. 0918-9068852) or drop them off at [illegible] Upstairs 2/F [illegible] Bldg. [illegible] (formerly Reposo), Makati City, [illegible] or Room 306, Medical Arts Building, Asian Hospital [illegible].

FOR THE BARE-FINGERED

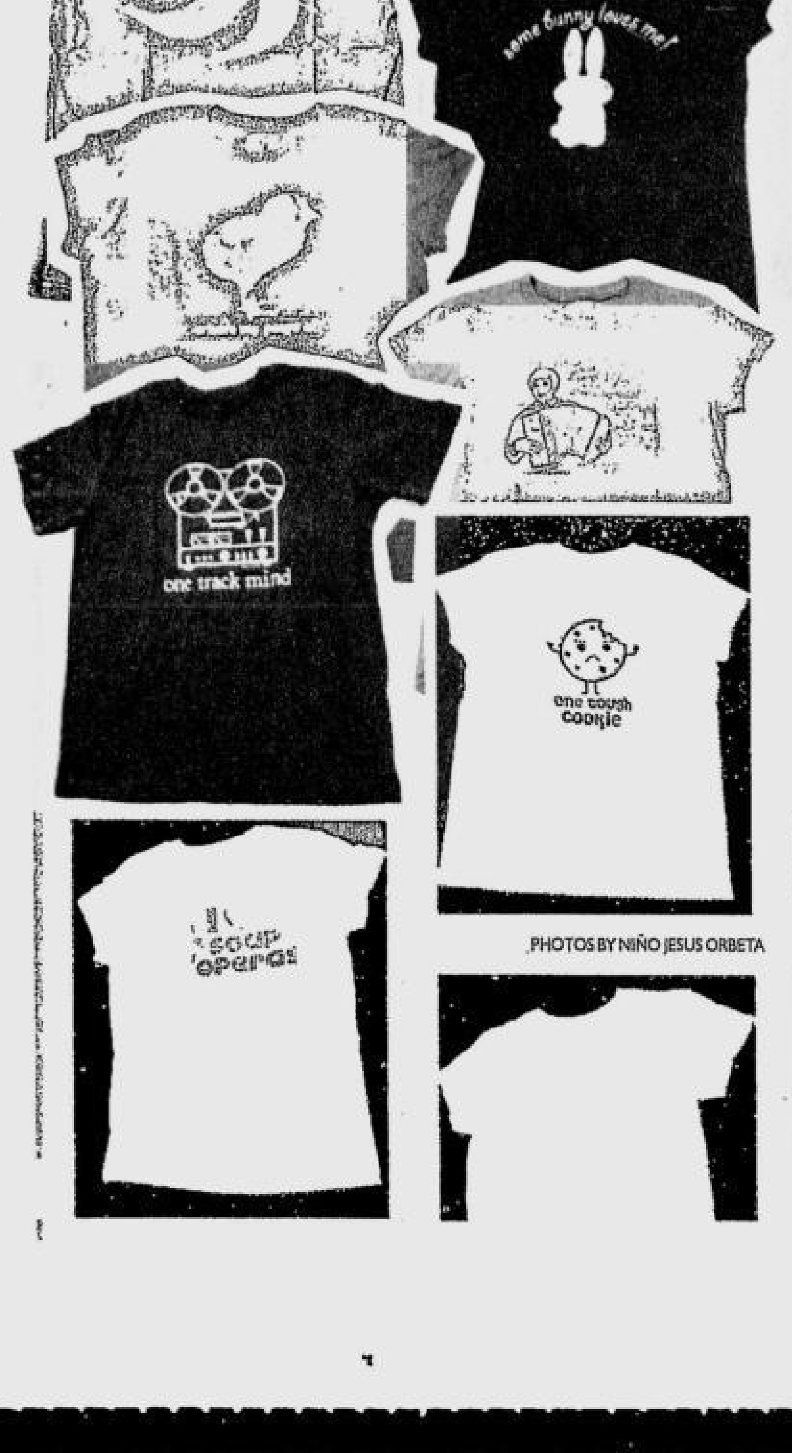




Switchingrings are fun plastic rings that you can mix and match. Manufactured in Canada, they come with an outer band and an inner wedge that you can interchange. There are countless colors, designs and patterns to choose from, so the possibilities are endless. Ricky Baizas, the country's Switchring distributor who also brought in Singelringen to the Philippines, says: "With gazillions of possible combos, you can go a little crazy."

Switchrings come in three sizes—small, medium and large. Check them out at Maxitoylab in Alabang Town Center and Glorietta, Maxiworks in Power Plant Mall and Eastwood Mall and Maxicollectibles at V Mall Greenhills. For orders outside Metro Manila, call 09189244621 or e-mail switchringph@ gmail. com. Switchings are P239.75 each.

FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO MAKE A (FUNNY) STATEMENT



PHOTOS BY NIÑO JESUS ORBETA

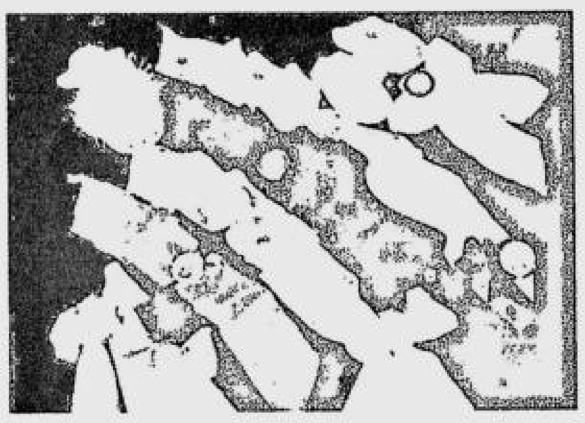
David & Goliath, a favorite brand of Luke Wilson, Tyra Banks and Jessica Simpson, is one of the new brands to hit the local market this year. It was brought to the country by Terry S.A., the same company that drove people wild with the arrival of Havaianas in 2003.

"We had looked at other brands and companies have written to us asking us if we wanted to carry theirs. But we want to bring in brands that are not obviously popular yet. We want to build brands that we personally like," says Anne Arcenas, Terry S.A.'s managing director for marketing and sales. Their strategy is working. David & Goliath's fan base is continuing to grow in Manila. "We were attracted to the shirts because they're humorous, and because shirts are very practical for Pinoys. The one-liners make them stand out. They are things you want to say but sometimes can't."

Terry S.A. has big plans for the brand. "By the first half of next year, we're going to open two concept stores, and that would include David & Goliath's complete line. They have pajamas, bags, wallets and accessories."

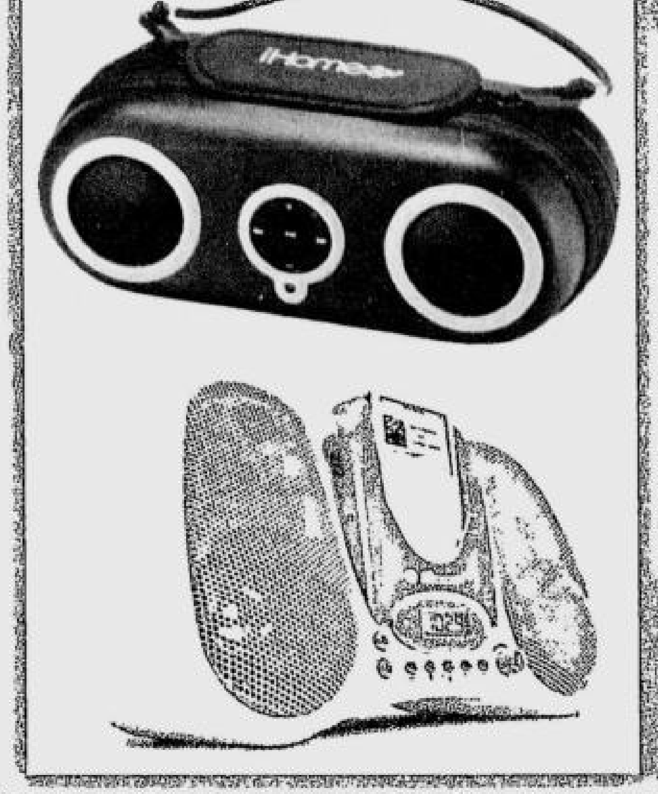
In the meantime, we can all wear David & Goliath's funny, witty and sometimes silly shirts—or give them to our funny friends this Christmas. David & Goliath shirts are available in Rustans Makati.

FOR THE FASHIONABLY LATE

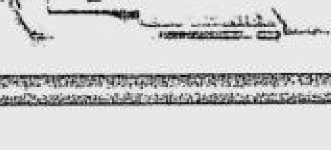


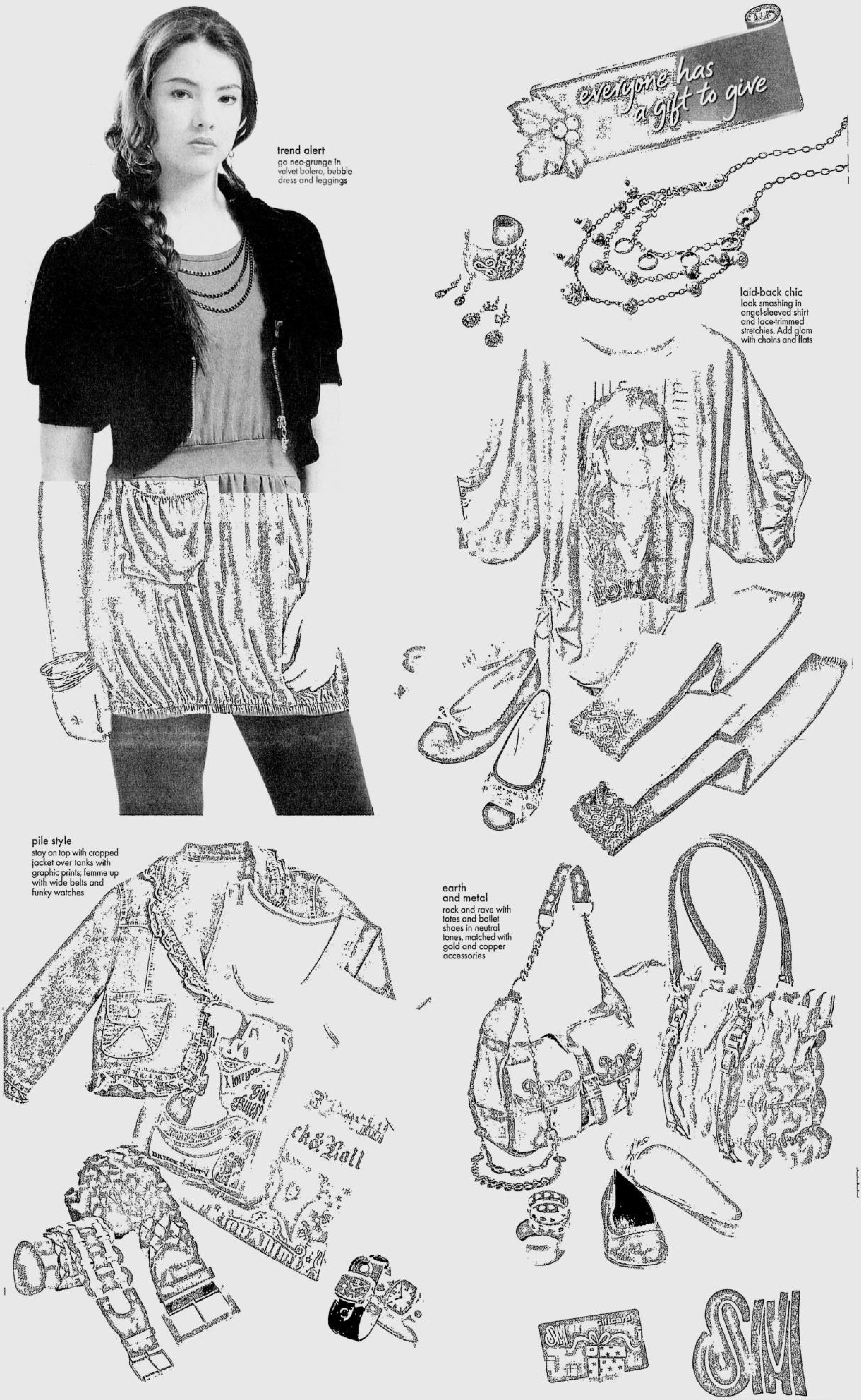
Make sure your loved one is never late again with these scarf watches from Vintage Watch Collections. This new offering from the Watch Lady comes with two extra scarves of your choice and a one-year warranty. Each watch is P850. Call 0928-7553838 and look for Gail Tinimbang-Santos.

FOR THE TECH FANATIC



Finding gifts for your technology-embracing loved one is easy. All you need is cash [illegible] 10,000. The Lexar Lightning Jumpdrive makes carrying files around easy. The [illegible] Boom Room box and the iHome iH19 are great speakers for their favorite digital music players. The Palm [illegible] Z22 is an excellent tool [illegible] organization. And the Apple AirPort Express and Linksys Wireless Bundle [illegible] and wireless card lets you turn your own home into a wireless hotspot. The Rudy Project Laptop Bag makes carrying your precious computer around stylish and convenient. All items are distributed by Microwarehouse. Call 637047[illegible] or visit http://www.microwarehouse.com.ph.





trend alert
go neo-grunge in
velvet bolero, bubble
dress and leggings

laid-back chic
look smashing in
angel-sleeved shirt
and lace-trimmed
stretchies. Add glam
with chains and flats

pile style
stay on top with cropped
jacket over tanks with
graphic prints; femme up
with wide belts and
funky watches

earth
and metal
rock and rave with
totes and ballet
shoes in neutral
tones, matched with
gold and copper
accessories

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BICUTAN • LUCENA • BAGUIO • MARILAO • DASMARIÑAS • BATANGAS • DELGADO • SAN LAZARO • SUCAT • STA. ROSA • CLARK • MALL OF ASIA • LIPA

Sweet shopping haven

We raided Serendra, Bonifacio High Street and found goodies for you and your loved ones

Text by Pam Pastor
Photos by Rodel Rotoni

NO MATTER HOW MUCH WE LOVE something, we try not to gush about it in the broadsheet. It's simply not done. But allow us to break the rules and say this: We love Serendra, Bonifacio High Street.

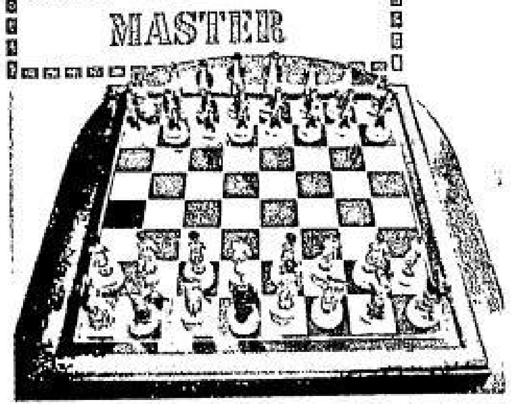
We love the giant squid steak and the grilled bacon-wrapped prawns at Polu Kai Grill. We love Mezzaluna's Angus Bistro Fillet with Foie Gras Ravioli Mushrooms and Truffle Foam. We love Sonja's cupcakes (Peppermint Patty is perfect—it tastes like Andes in cupcake form).

And for a while, we thought that Serendra offered adventures for the palate and little else. But our recent tour of Serendra revealed many discoveries.

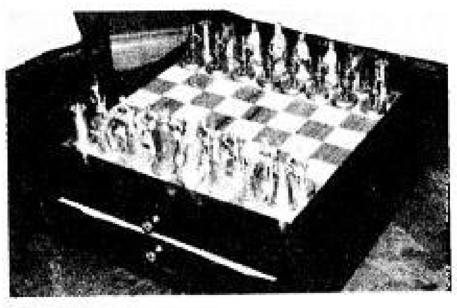
The place is not just lined with restaurants and excellent food stops, it is also home to art galleries, pampering hubs and good shopping. You can even do some Christmas shopping there. And the best part: no crazy lines.

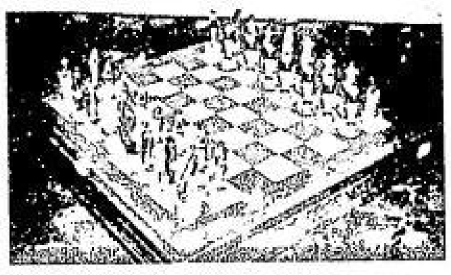
Visit Shops at Serendra, Bonifacio High Street at the Bonifacio Global City in Taguig. Watch out for our Serendra food and shopping guide in the pages of Lifestyle.

FOR THE CHESS MASTER



Hermle is not just home to beautiful clocks from Germany, it also offers beautiful chess sets with unique and intricately detailed chess pieces. Chess sets are P5,500.

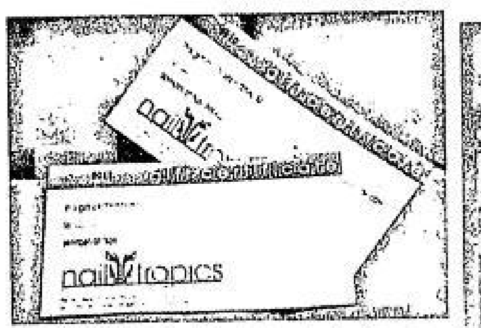




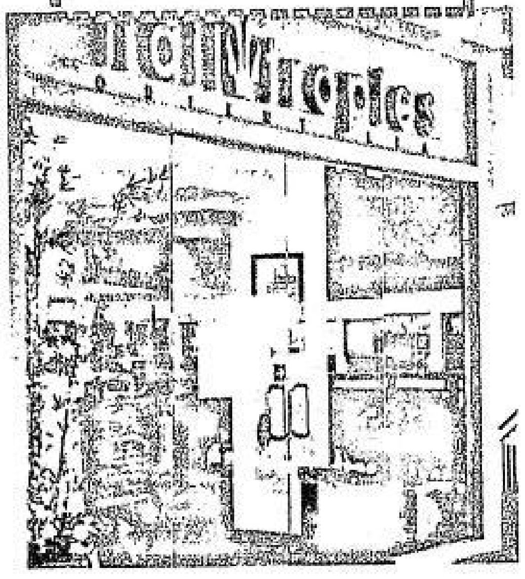
FOR THE ORIENTAL QUEEN

[illegible] is loaded with beautiful oriental-inspired pieces in delicious colors and bold prints from Seven Eight. Some pieces have intricate details, embroidery and bead work. Tops from [illegible] show [illegible] flexibility; they can be worn with jeans, with fab casual pants and even as dresses on the beach. Prices range from P600 to around P2,000. The bags and earrings are worth checking out as well. Seven Eight is a Fashion Freaks favorite, and you've probably checked out its stalls in Rockwell and The Rampa at Crossing Department Store. Now you can visit it at the second floor of Serendra, Bonifacio High Street.

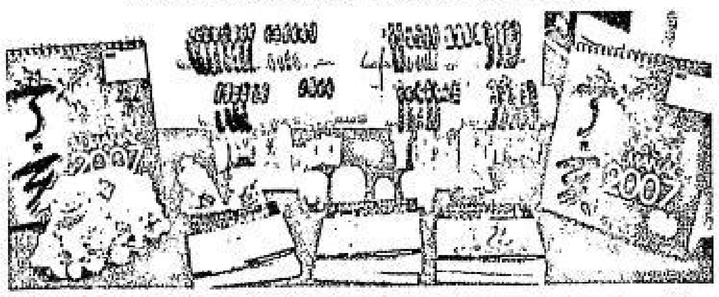
FOR THE PEDICURE ADDICT



Nail Tropics Orientalia claims to be "an oasis of total hands, feet and nail care." The place offers gift certificates so you can treat your loved one to an afternoon of pampering. Choose from a variety of treatments—classic, French, sport, express and kiddie manicures, Manicure or Pedi Spa, Executive Paraffin Pampering, Breath of Milk, Nail Repair, Nail Art and more.

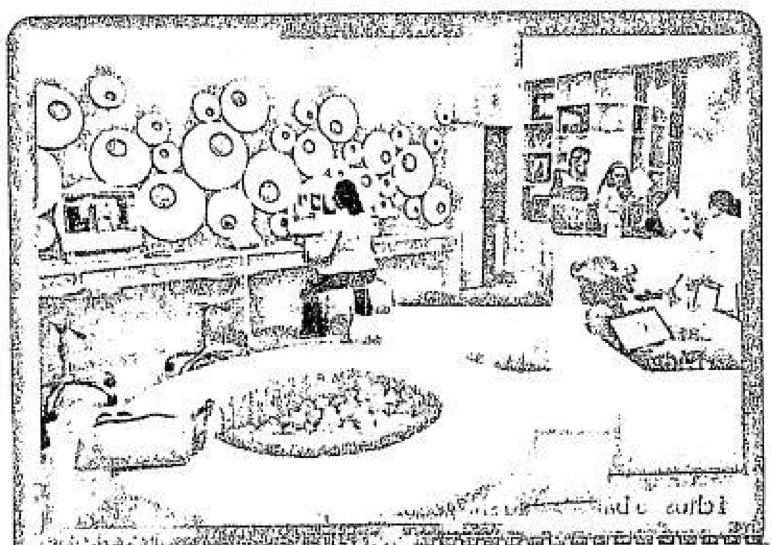


FOR THE FENG-SHUI JUNKIE

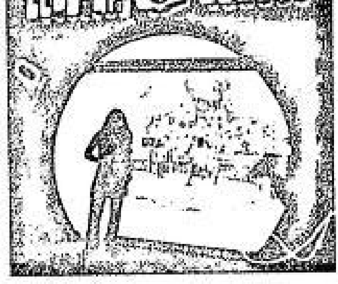


Visit World of Feng Shui and give your feng shui-loving friend a guide to the year of 2007—the year of the Fire Boar.

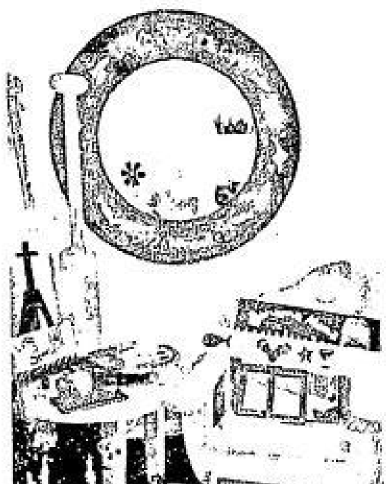
FOR THE MODEL WANNABE

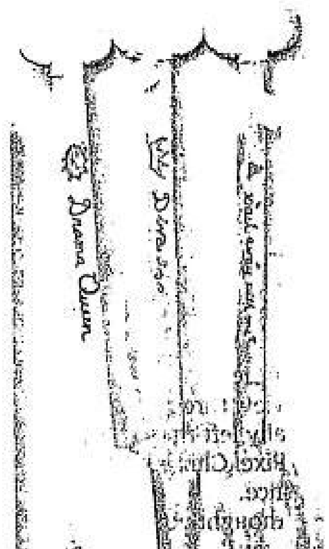


[illegible] deserves good photos [illegible] life. Contrary to the name, Blow-Up Babies doesn't do just baby and kiddie pictorials. It welcomes adults and pets too. This photography studio specializes in full production photography complete with costumes, props, backdrops and special [illegible]. Run by accomplished professionals in the field of photography, advertising, film and show business—[illegible] Martinez, Jessie [illegible], [illegible] Pastor, [illegible] and Nino Tadena—Blow-Up Babies promises to offer more than just pointing and clicking. Visit www.blowupbabies.com.

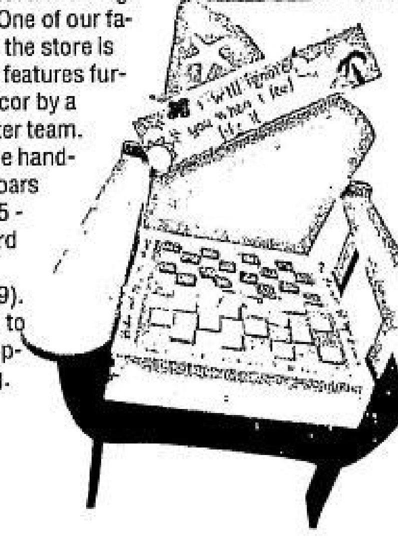


FOR THE BEACH BUM

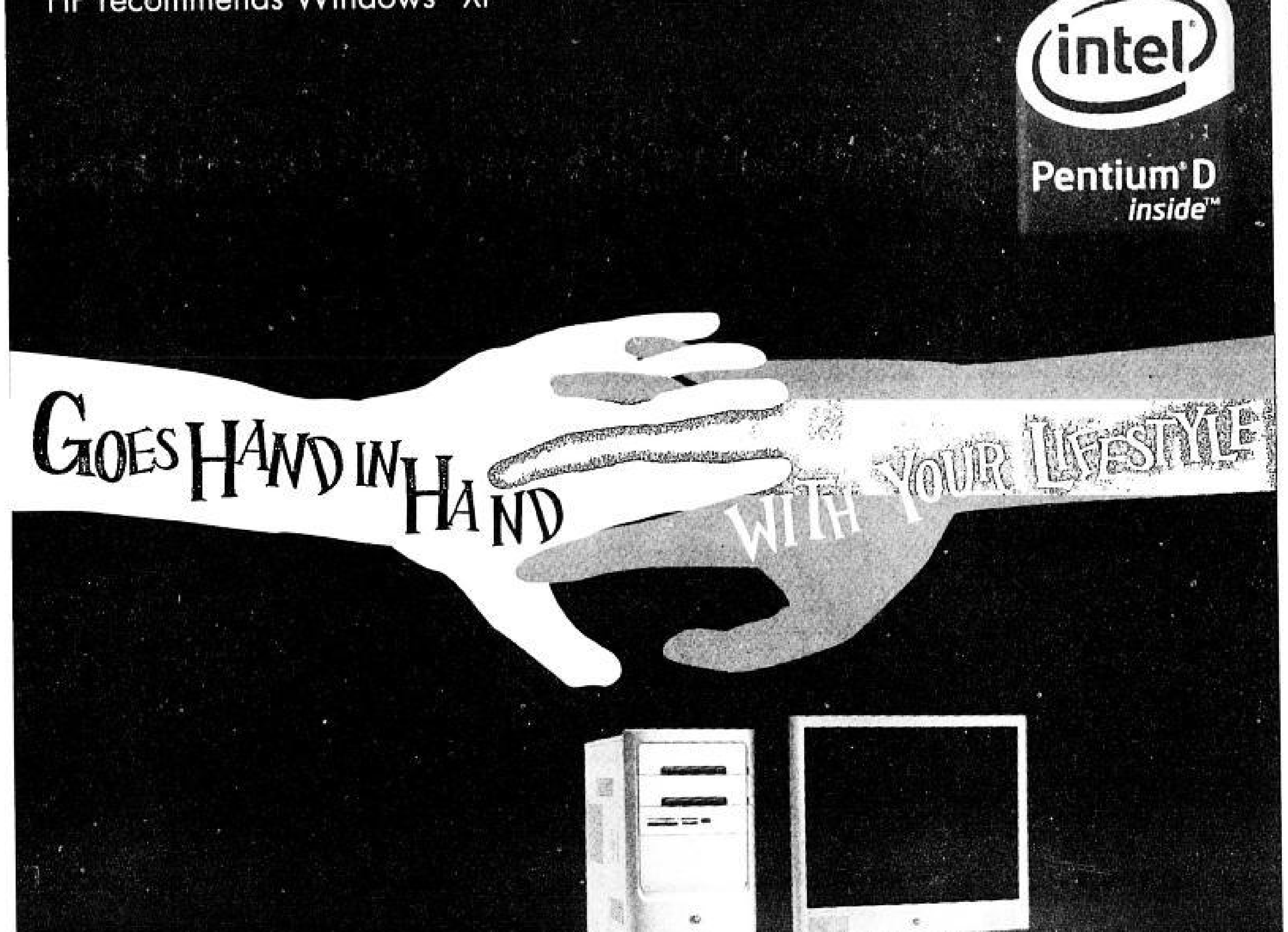




Luna, the store which Pinky Ortiz and Valerie Lopez (friends who run The Bead Shop) call their gift to themselves, is a gift for shoppers, too. The store features beautiful jewelry, bags and other one-of-a-kind pieces from local and foreign artists and brands. One of our favorite collections in the store is Sandcastles, which features furniture and home décor by a mother-and-daughter team. Our top picks are the hand-painted decorative oars (P895), signs (P395 - P595), checkerboard (P1,500) and the beach chair (P3,999). They're guaranteed to give any room a tropical getaway feeling.



HP recommends Windows® XP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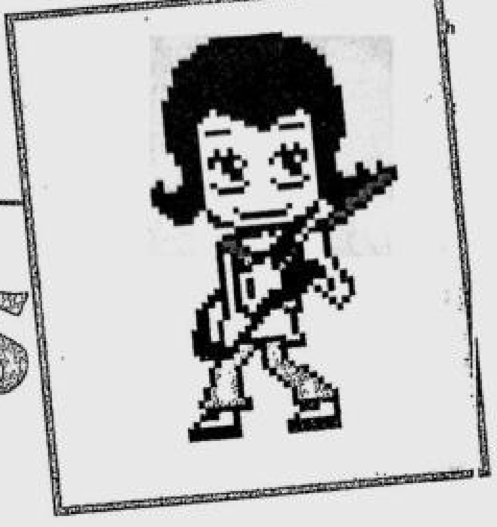
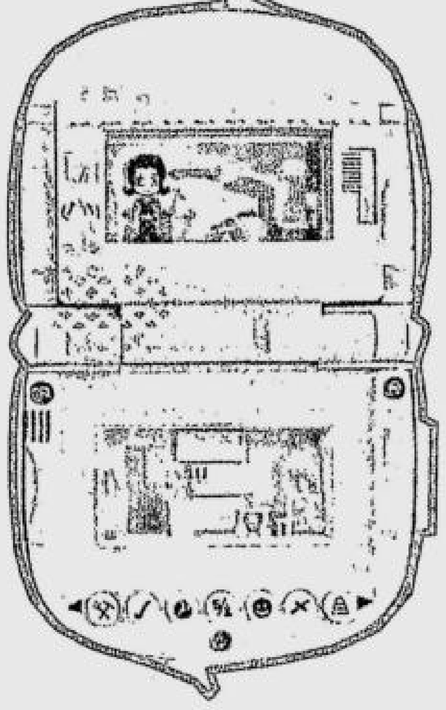
Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 5329 Series of 2006

FOR THE LITTLE GIRL WHO NEVER GREW UP

All I want for Christmas is Pixel Chix





Your 2D friend is a friend forever, at least until the batteries run out

By Pam Pastor

"WHAT SHALL WE DO?" my friend Nikki asked, staring at me with her big dark eyes.

"Eat?" I suggested. She walked over to her fridge, opened the door, wrinkled her nose and stuck out her tongue. "Yucky!"

She turned toward me and said, "Pick something."

I chose a banana and she gobbled it up. Then we spent the next minutes watching TV, dancing, playing the guitar and doing her homework. She was still bored.

"What shall we do?" Nikki asked again, this time tapping her foot impatiently.

We had run out of things to do at her house. It was time to go to the mall. But before that, we had to choose her outfit. Wanting to annoy her, I picked sleepwear.

"Go out in this?" she said, indignant.

Finally, we settled on a top and jeans. At the mall, she asked, "What should I buy?"

I chose boots for her and she said, "Fabulous!"

But when she asked for the price, she said, sulkily, "I don't have enough."

The girl who has turned me into a doormat and has me eating out of her hand isn't a needy, attention-seeking friend. She's a Pixel Chix, a toy innovation from Mattel. Yes, the company that gave the world the gift of Barbie.

2D girl in 3D world

Described as "a 2D girl living in a 3D world" (because she is a two-dimensional LCD image imposed on a background that features three-dimensional furniture), Pixel Chix offer interactive fun for little girls, tweens, and okay, even adults like me who refuse to grow up.

Some people compare it to The Sims. But I think of Pixel Chix toys as new-generation Tamagotchi injected with girlyness and a lot of attitude.

Oh yes, a lot of attitude.

On the first night that I was supposed to review three units of Pixel Chix, I accidentally left them at the office. The next day, Pixel Chix Nikki greeted me with annoyance.

"I thought you were my friend! Where were you?"

I spent the next couple of weeks getting to know three Pixel Chix girls. But they ended up getting to know other people as well. In just days, my Pixel Chix friends managed to charm other people in the office, my boyfriend, my friends, my brother and even my mother.

You can play with your Pixel Chix using the different buttons on the unit. Getting the hang of it is easy.

With the Pixel Chix Road Trippin' Car, which you can use as a keychain or as a

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Samsung D900	1,552.33	1,286.00	918.58	N/A	FREE
Sony Ericsson P990i	3,003.67	2,718.92	2,351.50	1,681.00	385.83

* Nokia 6233 available by 2nd week of December and Nokia 6085 by 3rd week of December 2006.
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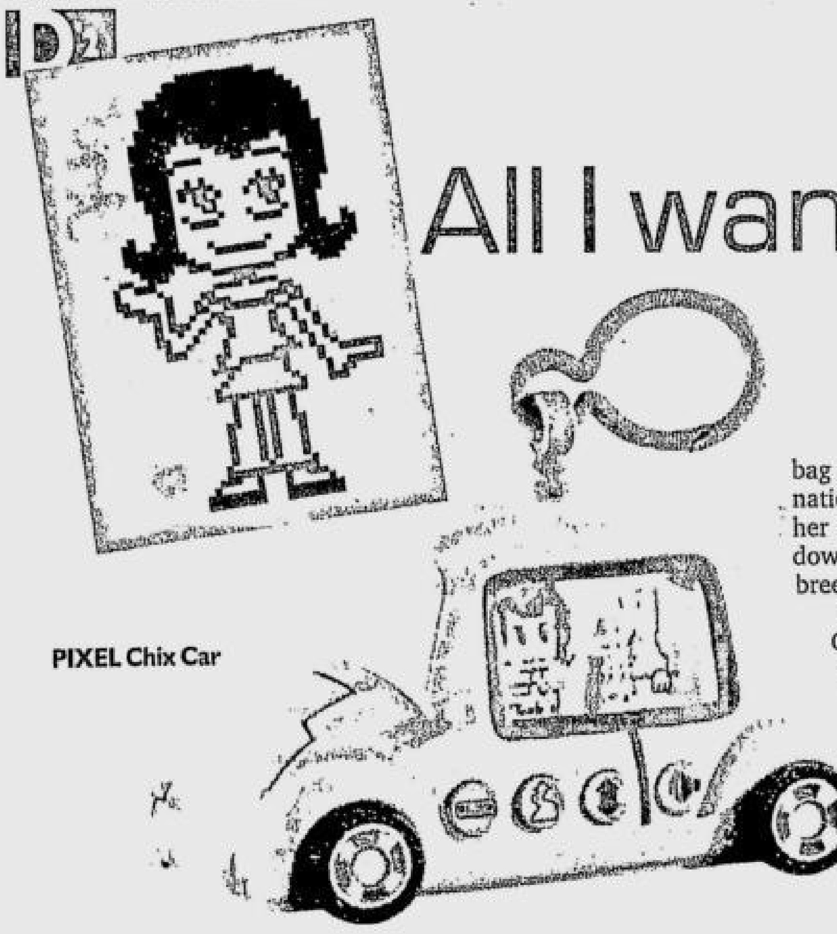


PIXEL Chix Car

All I want for Christmas is Pixel Chix

From page D1

bag accessory, you can choose different destinations, change the radio stations, listen to her sing along and roll the windows up or down so your Pixel Chix friend can enjoy the breeze.

But my favorites are the Pixel House-Country Cottage and the Pixel Chix Love 2 Shop Mall: Boutique/Food Court. They've kept me preoccupied for hours.

With the Country Cottage, you can choose clothes for your Pixel Chix, play with her, make her eat, dance, play the guitar, play with her cat, dog and goldfish, talk on the phone, watch TV, sleep, do her homework and more. You can also use her as a Magic 8 ball—she can answer yes or no questions. Other Pixel Chix houses available are the Miami Beach Villa, Beverly Hills Mansion and 2-Story Houses.

Work and shop

With the Pixel Chix Love 2 Shop Mall: Boutique/Food Court, your Pixel Chix friend can work at the mall and earn enough money to eat and shop. Using the flip screen, Pixel Chix can move from one shop to the other. She can work at the food court, serve customers, cook, sort the delivery and clean up. If she doesn't do well, the boss stops by to give her a scolding.

PIXEL CHIX
WORK!
EARN!
SPEND!

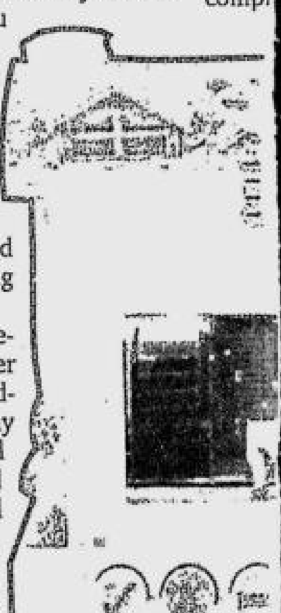
Play games and help her earn money. The more money she earns, the more fun you can have with her when you start shopping at the boutique. Let her try on clothes, shoes and accessories and help her choose which items she should buy. A variation of the Boutique/Food Court is the Pixel Chix Love 2 Shop Mall: Salon/Pet Shop.

Pixel Chix is actually a game. With the Pixel House, you reach new levels the more you play. And each level gives you more options—more outfits, different kinds of food and more activities to do with your little digital friend.

And no one is happier than your Pixel Chix when you reach a new level. She shouts, "Woohoo!"

When you give your Pixel Chix a lot of attention, she becomes nicer. Ignore her completely and she'll walk out, ending the game.

Although I was careful not to annoy her too much, I have to admit I liked it when my Pixel Chix showed feistiness. I also loved it when she tried catching my attention by clearing her throat and tapping her feet impatiently. I thought it was hilarious.



PIXEL Chix Countr

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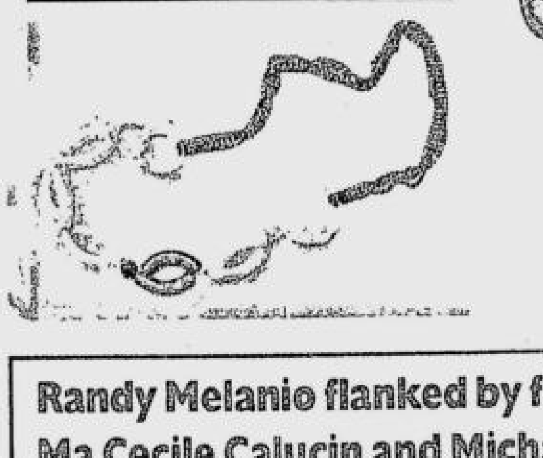

Randy Melanio flanked by fr
Ma Cecile Calucin and Micha

We are sales associates and customer care specia
shifts are from 10 a.m.-9 p.m. five times a week.

Seriously, our day will not be complete withou
Jill snacks: Facing an irate customers, solving su
problems are part of our daily routine, so we look
to our comfort food to give ourselves a break! K
lang kahit overtime *lagi, o may galit na* callers, *bu*
Jack 'n Jill! *Hay naku, sobrang salamat sa inyo. I*
ing and life *'pag may* Jack 'n Jill! Happy 50th birth

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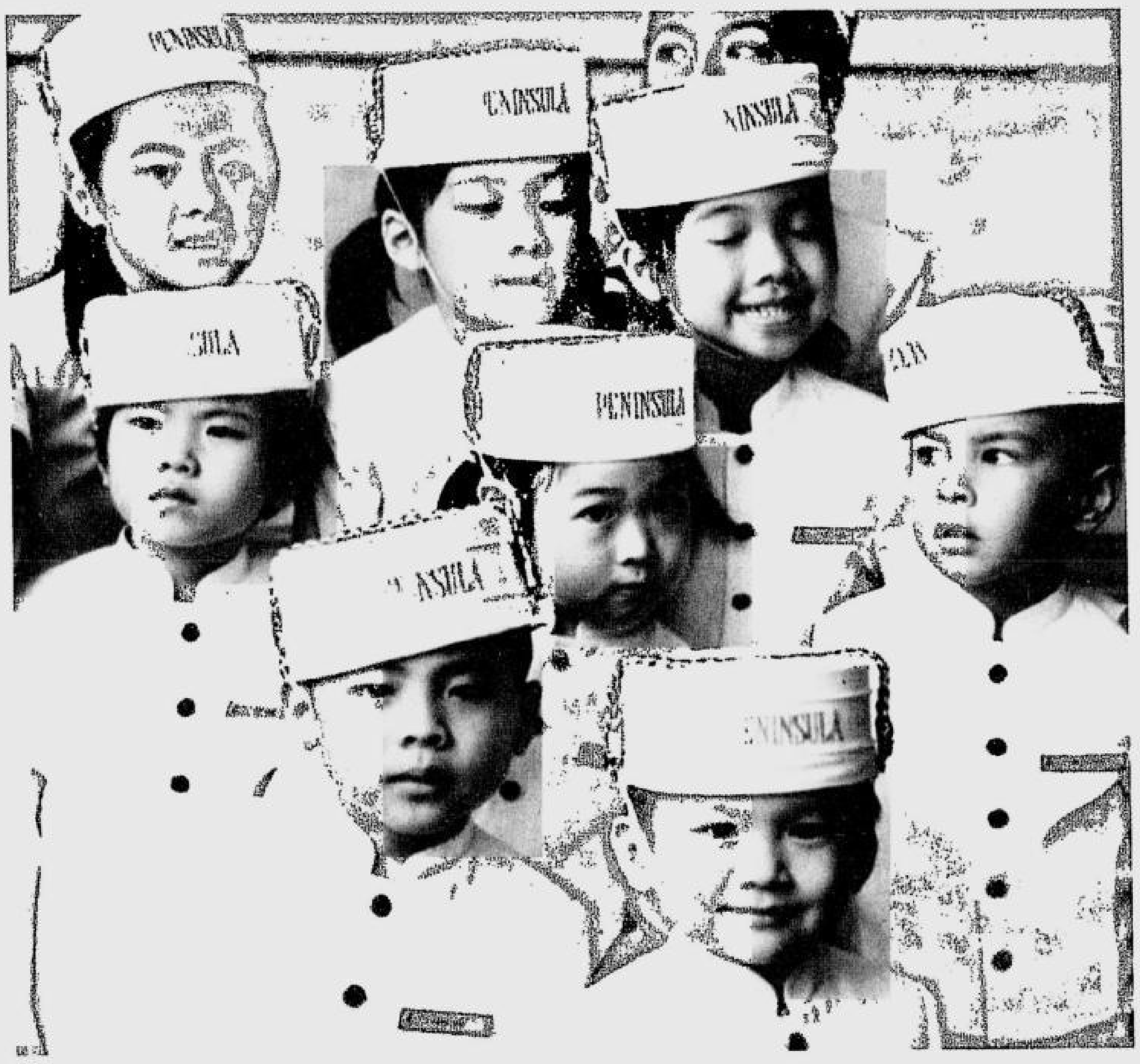

CHRISTMAS CONCERT AT THE PEN 2006

Headlining The Peninsula Manila's holiday music line-up is the 23rd year of Christmas Concert at The Pen with the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra under the baton of guest conductor Maestro Ruggero Barbieri. Listen to the sounds of Christmas as special guest artists soprano Rachelle Gerodias and tenor Nolyn Cabahug with the Mandaluyong Children's Choir and the UP Concert Chorus bring to life well-loved yuletide tunes.

Christmas Concert at The Pen is on 16 December 2006, Saturday, 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at The Lobby.

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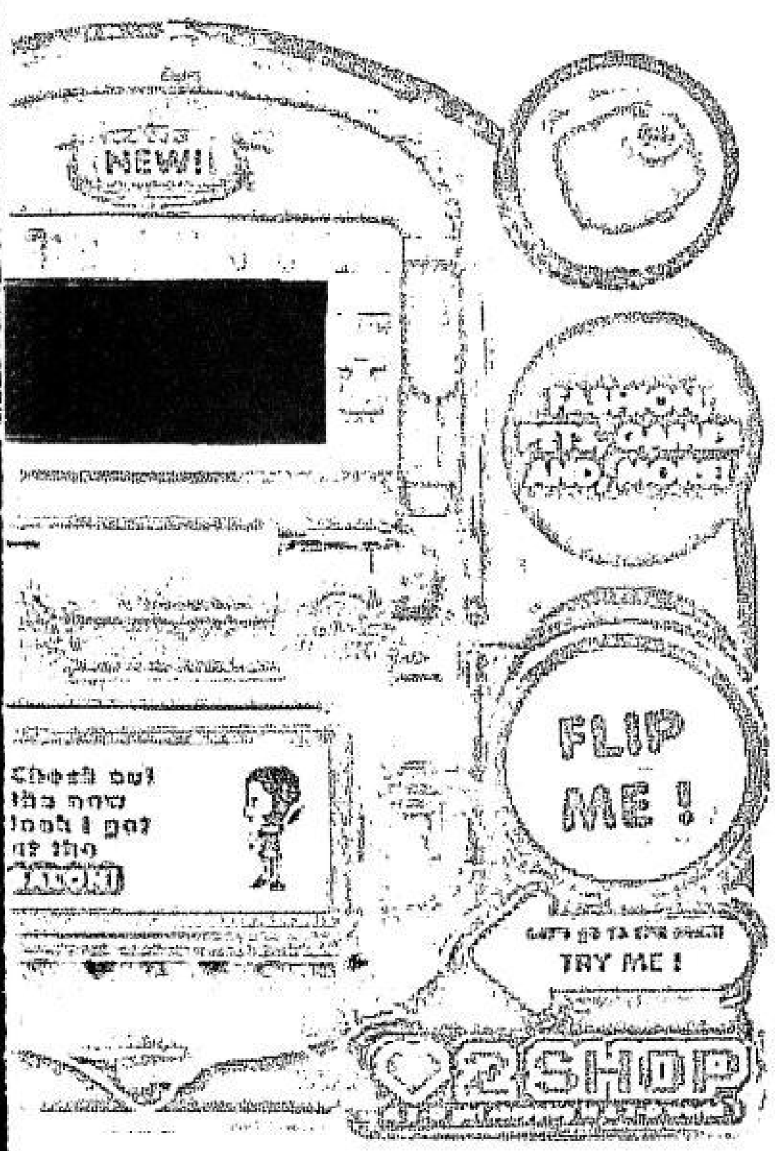
PIXEL Chix Love 2 Shop Mall: Salon/ Pet Shop



ute

Pixel Chix friend is so cute mes that you start to forget ıst a bunch of dots. She yawns, ks her tongue out, she sneezes, rops things. While watching ning sad on TV, she cries. When ll her to go to bed in the middle lay, she says, "I'm not tired!" when she does go to bed, you'll r bedroom light go on and hear eparing to sleep. She snores, mes. If you keep making her do vork, she'll fall asleep with her on the table. Sometimes she'll in, "Homework again?"

Make her put on her bathing suit and she'll try to go sunbathing in the middle of her living room. At the mall, if she discovers she's short of cash, she'll go to the ATM machine and withdraw more money.

Connect two Pixel Chix units together and you'll have even more fun. Connect the car to the house and watch her leave or come home. Connect two houses, two malls or a house and a mall together and watch two Pixel Chix girls dance together and bond. They'll even hug each other and say, "Best friends!"

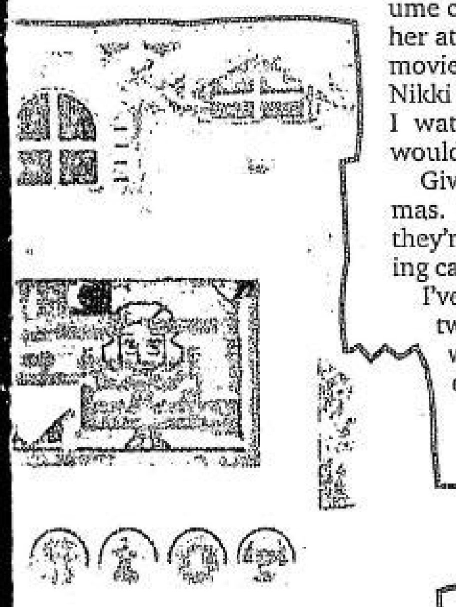
Just one tip: Because the Pixel Chix Country Cottage doesn't have a volume control, it would be wise to leave her at home if you're going to watch a movie. I made the mistake of bringing Nikki to Glorietta when my friends and I watched "The Covenant" and she wouldn't stop talking.

Give someone Pixel Chix this Christmas. They're fun, they're funny and they're a lesson in selflessness and taking care of someone else.

I've said goodbye to Nikki and our two other friends. Now all I'm left with are Pixel Chix memories and empty batteries.

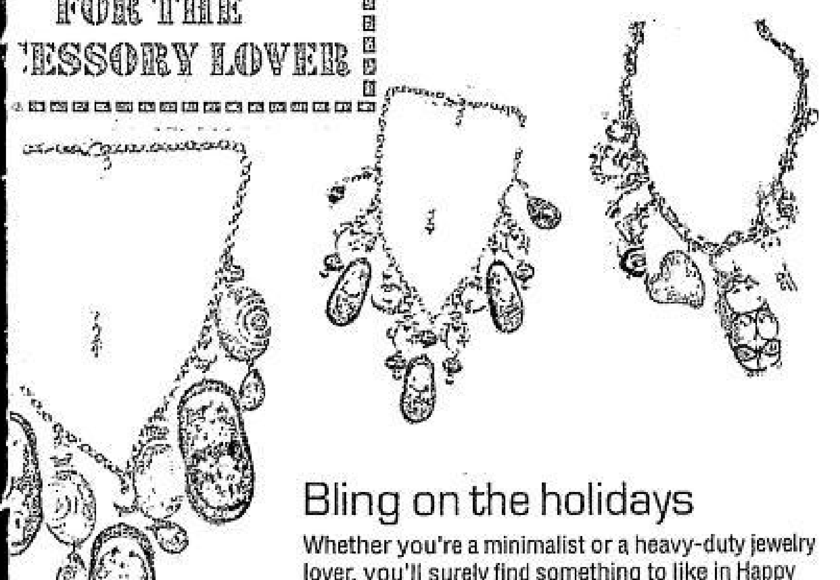
Pixel Chix toys are available at Toy Kingdom, SM Department Stores, Toys R Us and other leading department stores and toy stores.

E-mail the author at ppastor@inquirer.com.ph



y Cottage

FOR THE ESSORY LOVER



Bling on the holidays

Whether you're a minimalist or a heavy-duty jewelry lover, you'll surely find something to like in Happy David's collections. Choose from Get Happy's brightly colored beaded pieces or Lucy in the Sky's luxurious earrings and necklaces.

Also, watch out for new stocks of Wallex (expandable wallets) in crocodile and snakeskin this holiday. Visit Get Happy at 2/F Independent Lifestyles Area, Power Plant Mall.

Bianca Consunji

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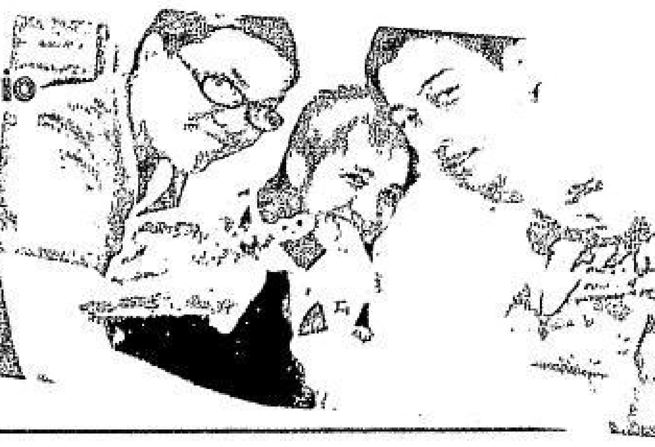
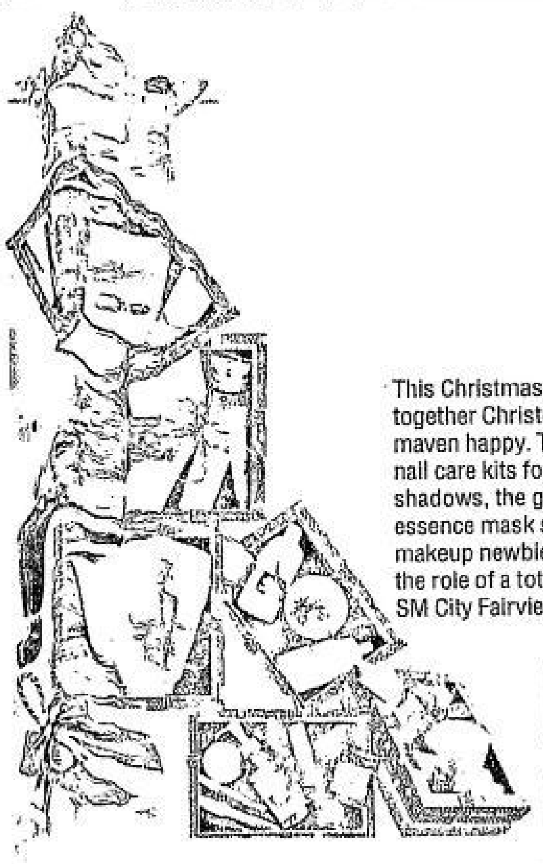
t Jack 'n scribers' forward *ya okay ta't may ndi bor-* lay!





FOR THE MAKEUP MAVEN

This Christmas, give the gift of beauty. Elianto, the popular cosmetic and skincare brand from Malaysia, has put together Christmas Kits that are packed with naturally inspired beauty products that would make any beauty maven happy. There are makeup kits for makeup fans, bath and shower kits for those who need pampering, and nail care kits for manicure and pedicure lovers. Fruity lip jelly, glittering powder puff, four-color shimmer eye shadows, the green tea makeup remover, eyelash curler, glitter blusher, shower gels, body lotion and body scrub, essence mask sheets—choose from Elianto's best products and find the perfect match for your friend. Both makeup newbies and longtime beauty product fans will love these super-packed treats. And if you want to play the role of a total Santa, give more than just one Christmas Kit. Visit Elianto at SM North Edsa, SM Mall of Asia, SM City Fairview and SM City Clark.

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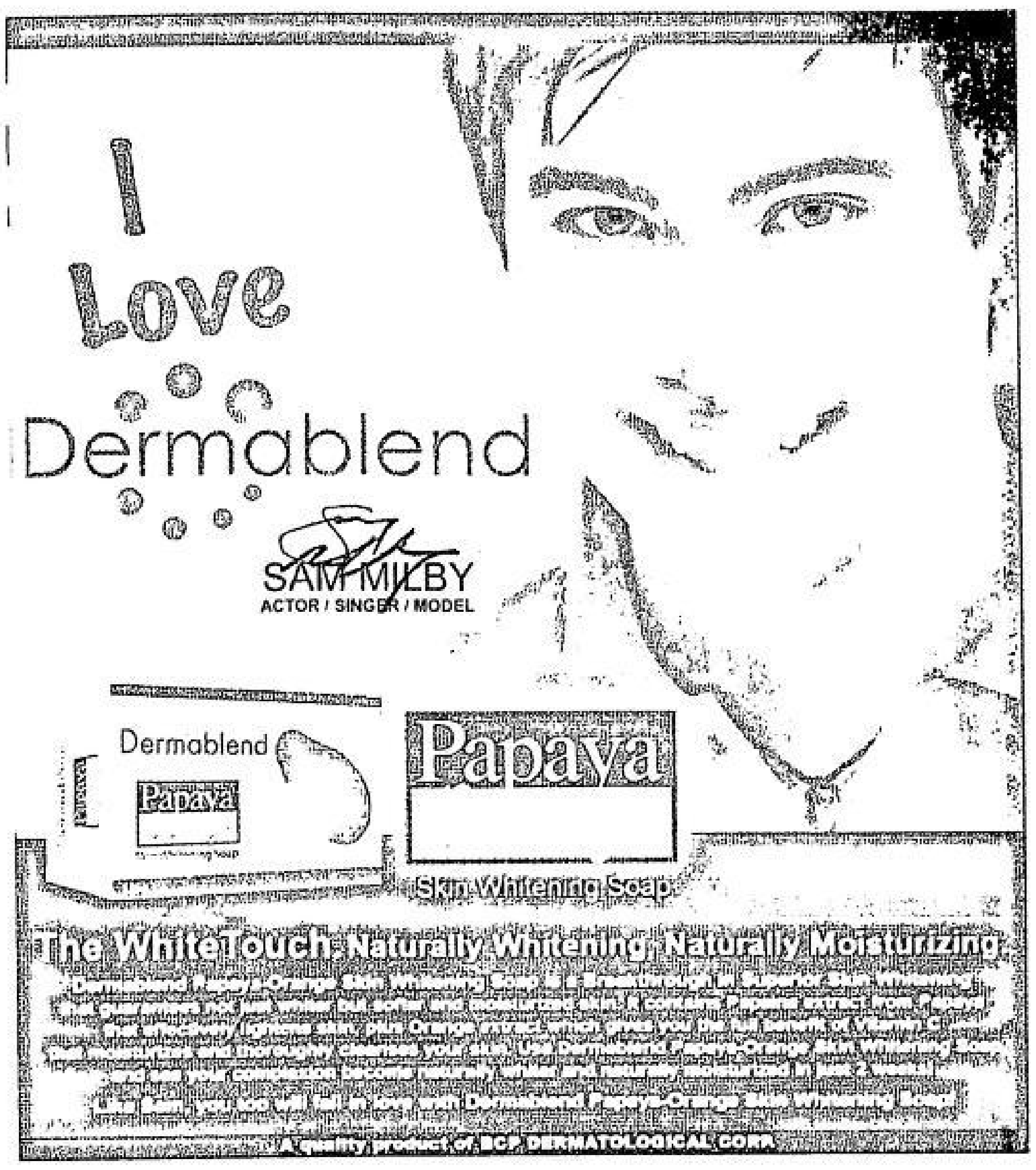
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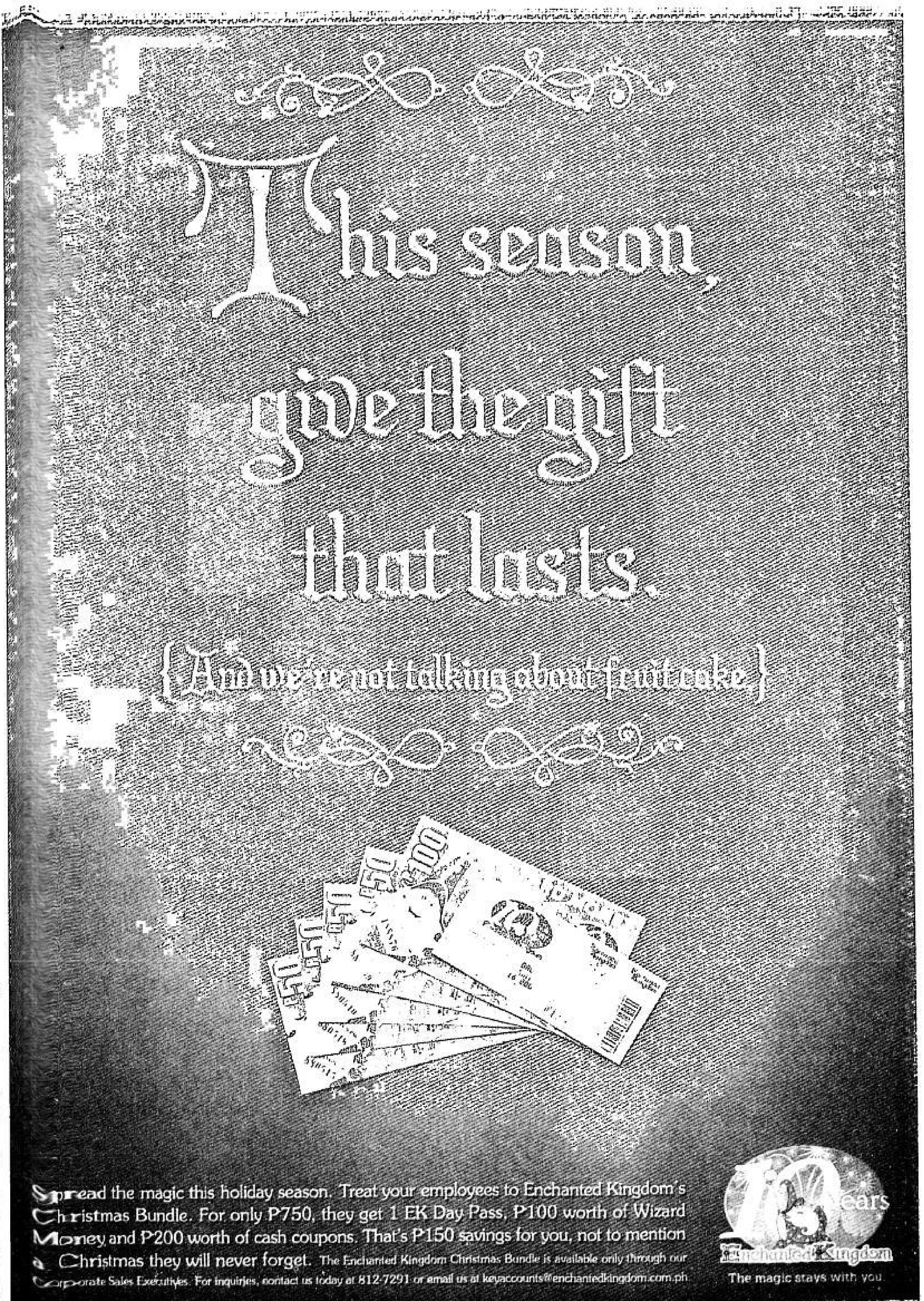
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FOR THE HOT GUY

Scent of a hottie

By Niño Mark M. Sablan
2bU! Correspondent

RJ LEDESMA makes sure the males side is represented during the discussions.

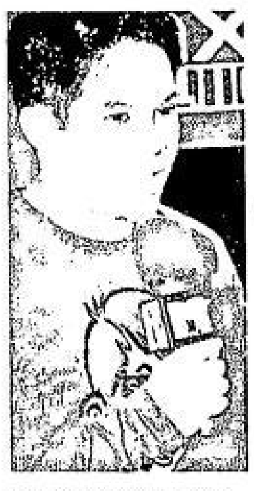
FOR SOME PEOPLE, LOVE happens not at first sight, but on the first sniff.

Scent, after all, is a major attraction maker or breaker. Use the right one and heads will turn and looks will linger. Use the wrong scent and noses will crinkle and people will turn away from you.

Axe, Unilever's sexy body fragrance brand, definitely didn't forget this when it created its latest scent called Click. Axe Click has the right mix of scent notes designed to work with one's natural body chemistry.

Blending the energy of citrus and fruit notes, a hint of spice, the mingling aroma of Orris and wood, and the calming whiff of a cool water base, Axe Click is neither overpowering nor too light.

It combines warm, intense notes and breezy, soft scents, producing a fragrance that is macho, sophisticated and sensual all at the same time.


DJ MO Twister, who believes scent plays a big part in meeting new people, hosts the event and facilitates the panel discussion.

WITH the new Axe Click, get ready to be sniffed by everyone!

Axe recently held "Men's Scents and Sensuality," a medley of enlightening chit-chats, a mini-fashion show and some scent-sniffing at the aroma-filled People's Palace at Greenbelt 3.

Highlight of the event was a discussion on scent, sensuality and attraction. Panelists included Metro Weddings magazine editor Romina Urra-Gonzales, Mega magazine beauty editor Vicky Tensuan, Cosmopolitan magazine editor in chief Ianne Evangelista, Manual magazine editor in chief RJ Ledesma, together with University of Santo Tomas Sociology professor Josephine Aguilar-Placido.

Apart from tackling topics such as body language, scent quality and the role of scent in human relationships, the panelists also shared the kinds of scents they preferred.

Tensuan, for example, said she is a huge fan of anything fresh or citrusy on her. Evangelista, on the other hand, expressed preference for something fresh, masculine and musky on her man.

Whatever scent you want for yourself or your partner, Gonzales had one advice: "Take time and be patient in finding the right scent."

The new Axe Click is now available at all supermarkets and beauty shops.

E-mail the author at marksablan_2bu@yahoo.com

FOR HIP FILIPINOS

Local flavors with a twist

Skip the barong and the *baro't saya* and head right over to Team Manila for the coolest Pinoy-inspired graphic shirts and bags. Being nationalistic never looked this good. Log on to http://www.teammanilalifestyle.com or check out their store at 2/F, Independent Lifestyles section, Power Plant, Rockwell.

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Stephen Ku, Marc Abaya of Kjwan, Mari Litonjua, Gabby Katigbak

MOTOROKR
Rocking With the Icons

This year, Motorola's Rock Mo'to has gone bigger and better. Dubbed as the School of Rock Mo'to, Motorola brought together rock icons and local music industry's experts to inspire young and aspiring musicians to a two-day rock workshop.

15 bands composed of 16-25 year-olds, carefully selected from over a hundred amateur, unsigned bands who submitted an MP3 demo of an original song, were invited to attend the School of Rock Mo'to at UP's University Hotel.

The two-day workshop was facilitated by a league of talented individuals who have earned their 'degrees' in the real world of rock. Up DharmaDown's Armi Millare; RadioActive Sago Project's Junji Lerma, Francis DeVeyra, Ray Gapasin; Paramita's Marco de Leon, Alsey Cortez, Ria Bautista; Juan Pablo Dream's Bing Austria, Madz Abubakar of Nyco Maca and Mark Laccay of Drip taught vocals, lead, bass guitars, and drums. Terno Record's Toti Dalmacion gave lessons in band management, while Mark Laccay and Alex Lim joined in to teach technical production aspects and basic survival skills.

Culminating the School of Rock Mo'to was a grad concert headlined by Chicosci, Dicta License, Pedicab, Sandwich, Urbandub, and Rivermaya. From classic punk rock, to reggae hip-hop fusion, to revival ska, and Pinoy rock, the flavor and style of each band that made it to the top fifteen is distinct, they all have a unique edge and Filipino sound.

The pride of Cebu, CDMC, took home the grand plum. Each band member received a MOTOROKR E2 handset, the mobile phone designed for the ultimate in wireless experiences. They also received PhP 50,000 cash, a six-month management contract, and the privilege of being part of the official roster of elite Motorola endorsers. Final Vow and The Delinquents ended up in the second and third places, respectively.

With the School of Rock Mo'to, Motorola has strengthened its leadership role in furthering the development of musicians---from the grassroots to the mainstream music scene in the Philippines. The School of Rock Mo'to, in the past two years, has shown and presented to you upcoming talents, unique sound and alternative music. Next year, Motorola will continue to rock the world of music.

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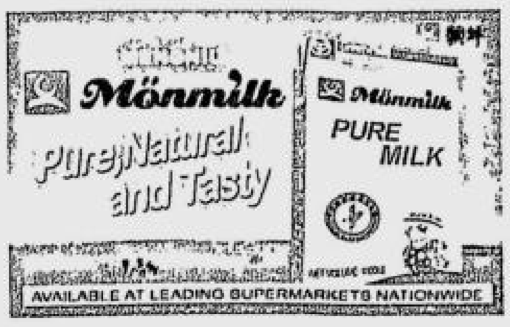
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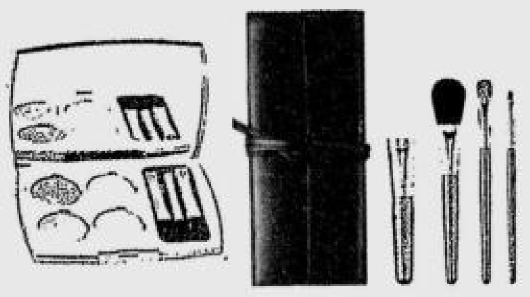
HAIR: CHRIS CADAGAT OF BASECUT SALON LIBIS
MODEL: PATTY MENDOZA

FOR THE TRUE-BLUE 'KIKAY'



for golden holidays

Several luxurious makeup lines add to the glitter of Christmas

Text by Bianca Consunji, *2bU! Correspondent*
Photos by Sara Black

AGAIN, IT'S THE SEASON OF LUXURIOUS makeup looks. The holidays usually bring with them metallic hues, bright jewel colors and ornate patterns, and this season is no exception—from Shu Uemura's Grand Opera to Patrick Rosas' new makeup line, there are plenty of fresh holiday collections to choose from, whether you're planning to use them yourself or give them away as gifts.

Since the cold weather allows you to wear a little more makeup than usual, now is the time to experiment with smokey eyes and rich lipstick. Your everyday lip and cheek tint and lip balm just won't do, unless you want to look washed out in all the photos of your family reunions.

If you want to look more glamorous for special events, try putting on a pair of false eyelashes—choose long feathery ones if you're feeling adventurous, or a pair of plain black ones if you want to make your eyes look bigger than usual.

Check out Shu Uemura's Shimmer Brocade false lashes, which are adorned with gold thread to add extra sparkle to your gaze.

Packaging plays an important role in this season's makeup collections. MAC, for instance, came up with palettes and makeup sets decked out in assorted fabrics such as lace, satin, eyelet cloth, fishnet and velvet.

Check out the season's latest offerings at your favorite makeup counters—they'll make perfect stocking stuffers for your *kikay* family and friends.

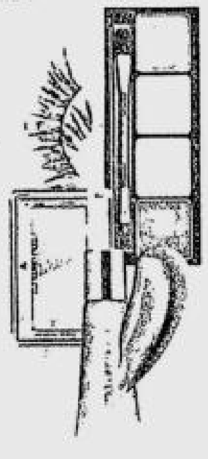
Shu Uemura, Lancôme, MAC and Patrick Rosas for G-Lish are available at Rustan's Makati, Alabang and Shangri-La. Becca is available at Marionnaud SM Mall of Asia; The Body Shop and VMV at leading malls nationwide.

Shu Uemura Grand Opera

Inspired by the Old-World glamour and the opulence usually seen on the opening night of an opera, the Grand Opera Collection features warm, vibrant shades with the softness of velvet and satin.

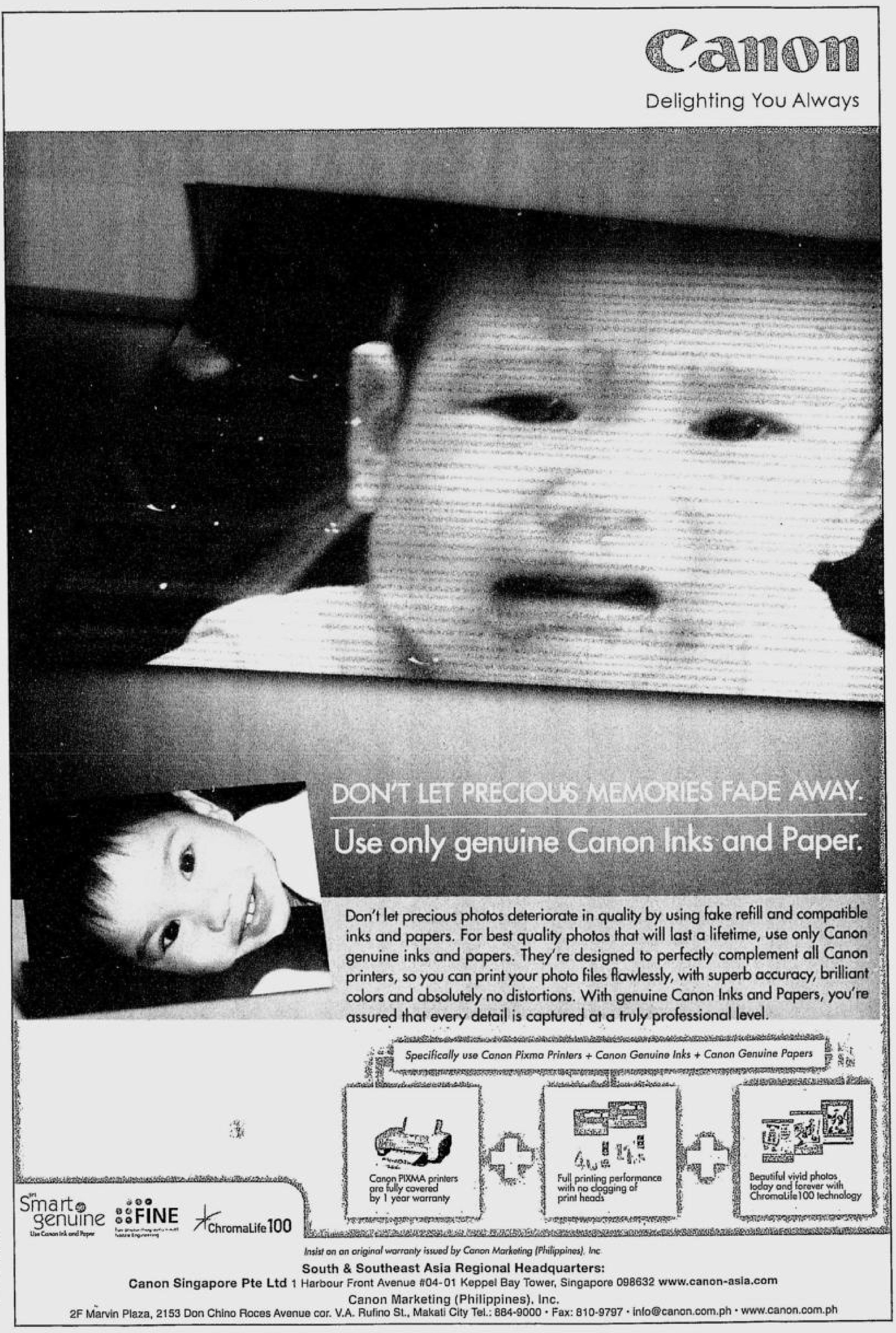
The stars of the collection are two makeup palettes in Soft Satin (iridescent plum, gunmetal brown, pearl rose-pink and terracotta) and Rich Velvet (pearl mandarin-orange, deep plum, irides-

GOLDEN/E3



SHU UEMURA Grand Opera

SMOKY eyes are the way to go this season.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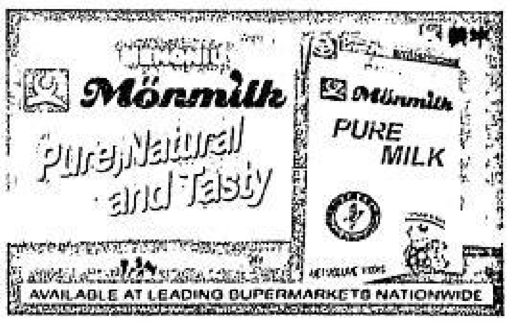
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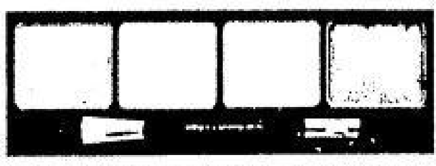

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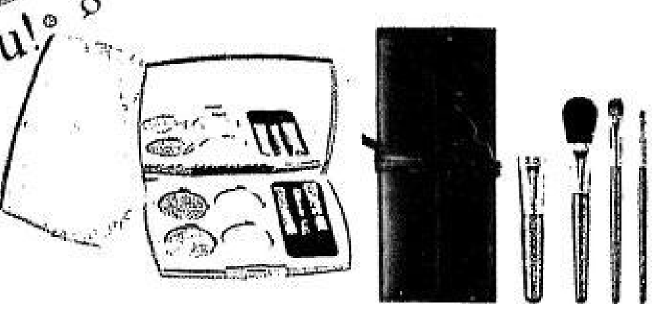

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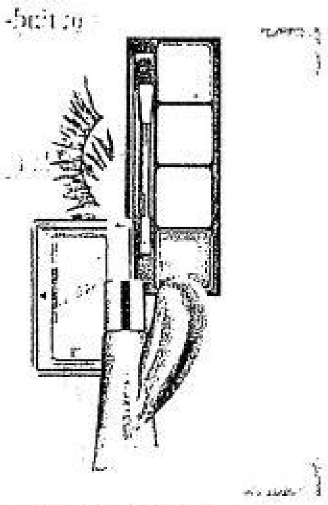
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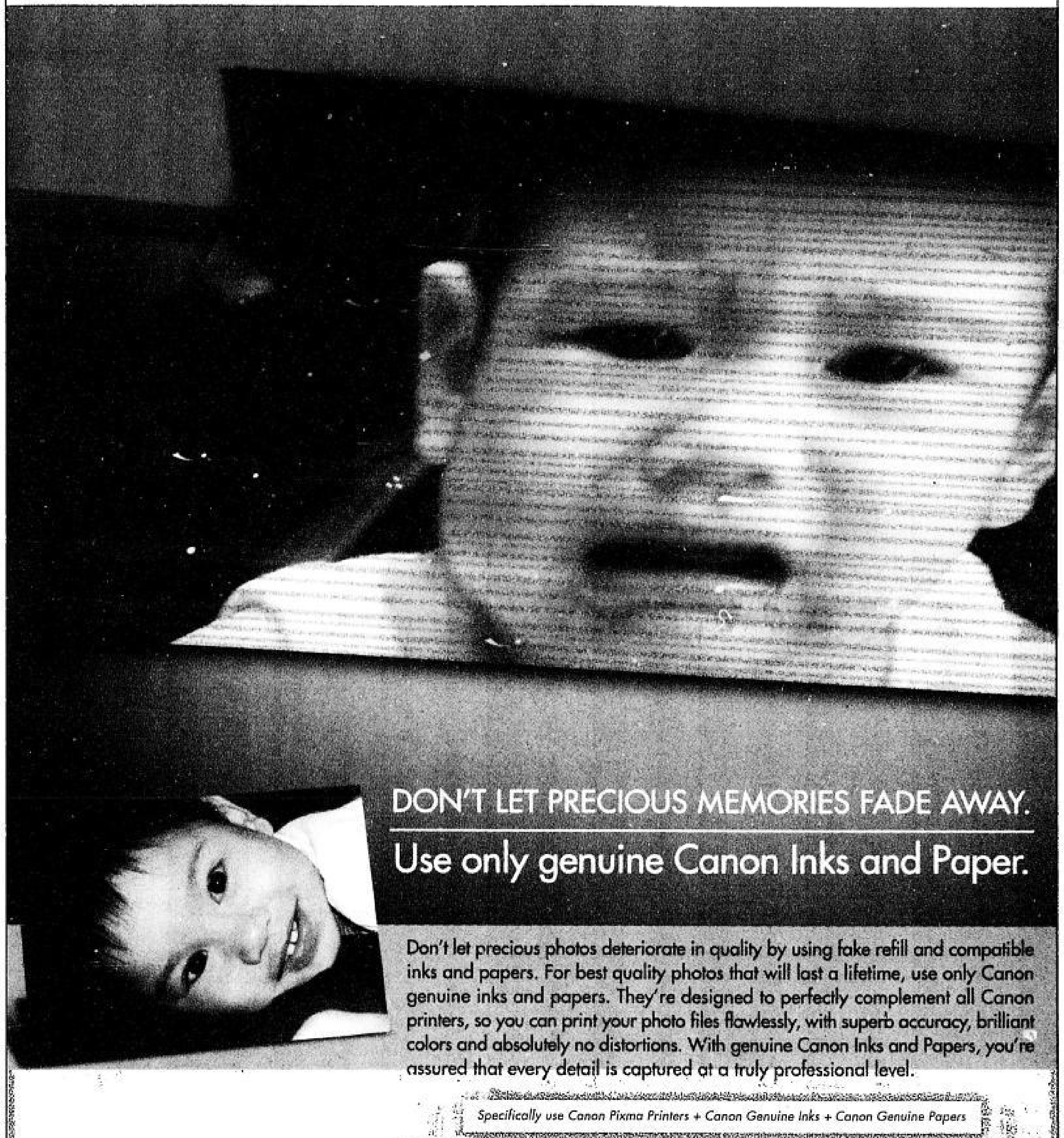

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Canon Marketing (Philippines), Inc.
2F Marvin Plaza, 2153 Don Chino Roces Avenue cor. V.A. Rufino St., Makati City Tel.: 884-9000 • Fax: 810-9797 • info@canon.com.ph • www.canon.com.ph

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Mönmilk PURE MILK
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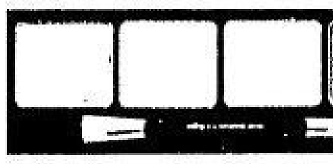
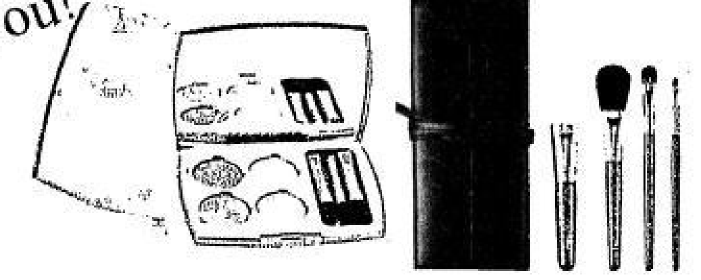
OR glamour and glitz with Lancôme's "Crystal Holiday" collection





MAKEUP: GELA LAUREL OF LANCÔME
HAIR: CHRIS CADAGAT OF BASECUT SALON LIBIS
MODEL: PATTY MENDOZA

FOR THE TRUE-BLUE 'KIKAY'

for golden holidays

Several luxurious makeup lines add to the glitter of Christmas

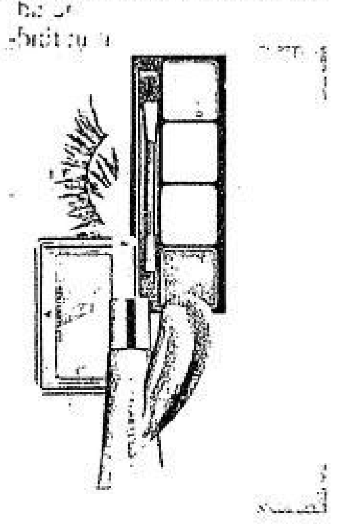
Text by Bianca Consunji, *2bU! Correspondent*
Photos by Sara Black

AGAIN, IT'S THE SEASON OF LUXURIOUS makeup looks. The holidays usually bring with them metallic hues, bright jewel colors and ornate patterns, and this season is no exception—from Shu Uemura's Grand Opera to Patrick Rosas' new makeup line, there are plenty of fresh holiday collections to choose from, whether you're planning to use them yourself or give them away as gifts.

Since the cold weather allows you to wear a little more makeup than usual, now is the time to experiment with smokey eyes and rich lipstick. Your everyday lip and cheek tint and lip balm just won't do, unless you want to look washed out in all the photos of your family reunions.

If you want to look more glamorous for special events, try putting on a pair of false eyelashes—choose long feathery ones if you're feeling adventurous, or a pair of plain black ones if you want to make your eyes look bigger than usual.

Check out Shu Uemura's Shimmer Brocade false lashes, which are adorned with gold thread to add extra sparkle to your gaze.



SHU UEMURA Grand Opera

Packaging plays an important role in this season's makeup collections. MAC, for instance, came up with palettes and makeup sets decked out in assorted fabrics such as lace, satin, eyelet cloth, fishnet and velvet.

Check out the season's latest offerings at your favorite makeup counters—they'll make perfect stocking stuffers for your *kikay* family and friends.

Shu Uemura, Lancôme, MAC and Patrick Rosas for G-Lish are available at Rustan's Makati, Alabang and Shangri-La. Becca is available at Marionnaud SM Mall of Asia; The Body Shop and VMV at leading malls nationwide.

Shu Uemura Grand Opera

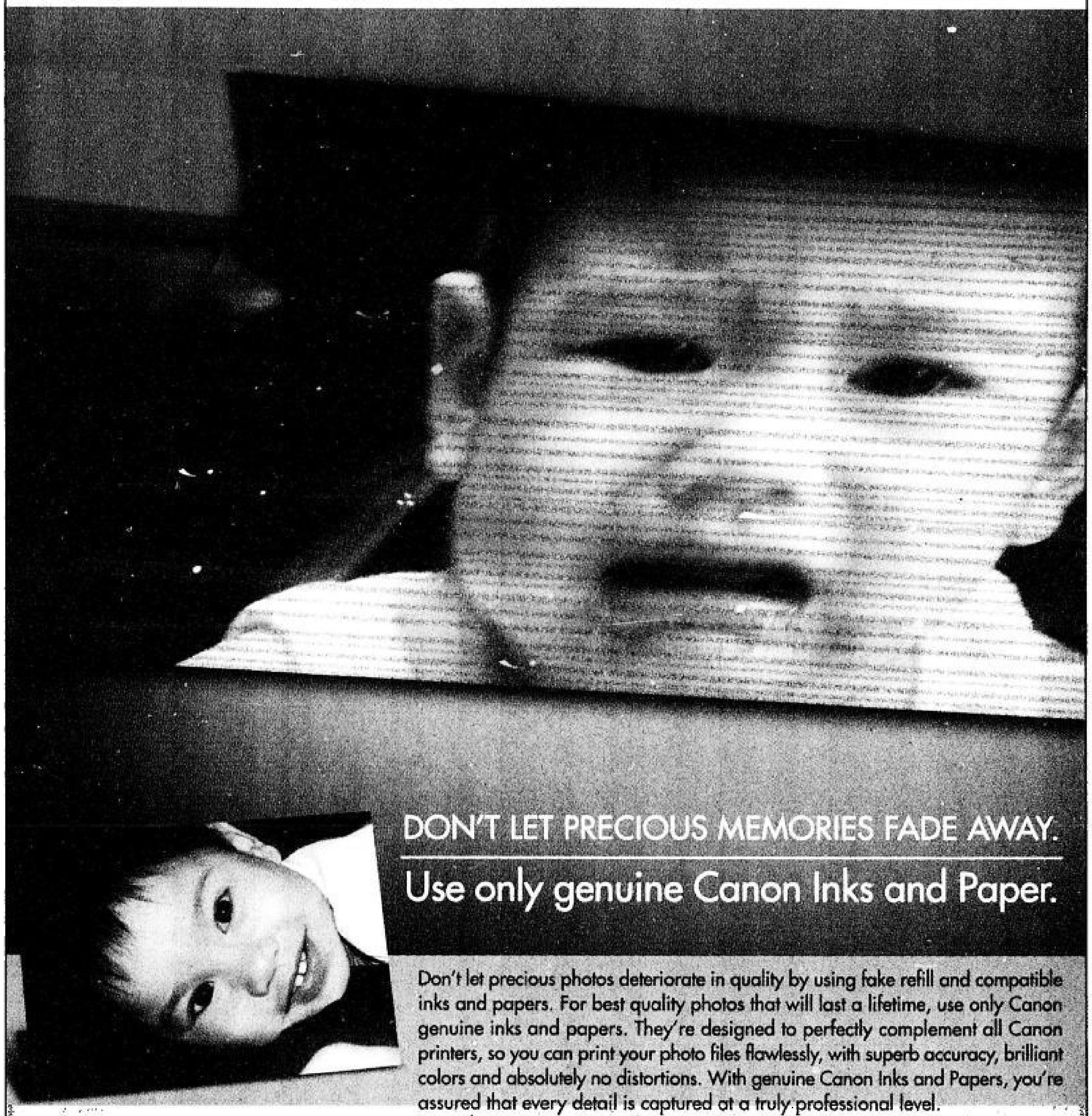
Inspired by the Old-World glamour and the opulence usually seen on the opening night of an opera, the Grand Opera Collection features warm, vibrant shades with the softness of velvet and satin.

The stars of the collection are two makeup palettes in Soft Satin (iridescent plum, gunmetal brown, pearl rose-pink and terracotta) and Rich Velvet (pearl mandarin-orange, deep plum, irides-

GOLDEN/E3

SMOKY eyes are the way to go this season.

Canon
Delighting You Always



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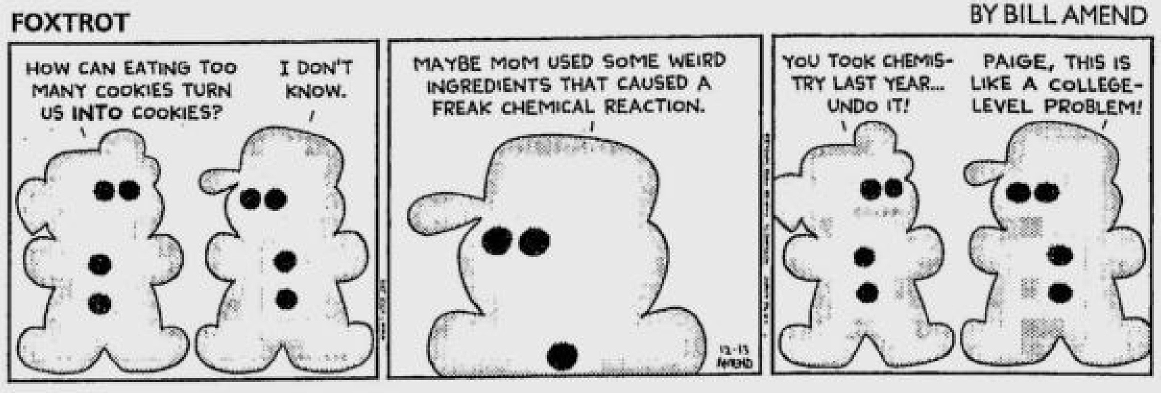
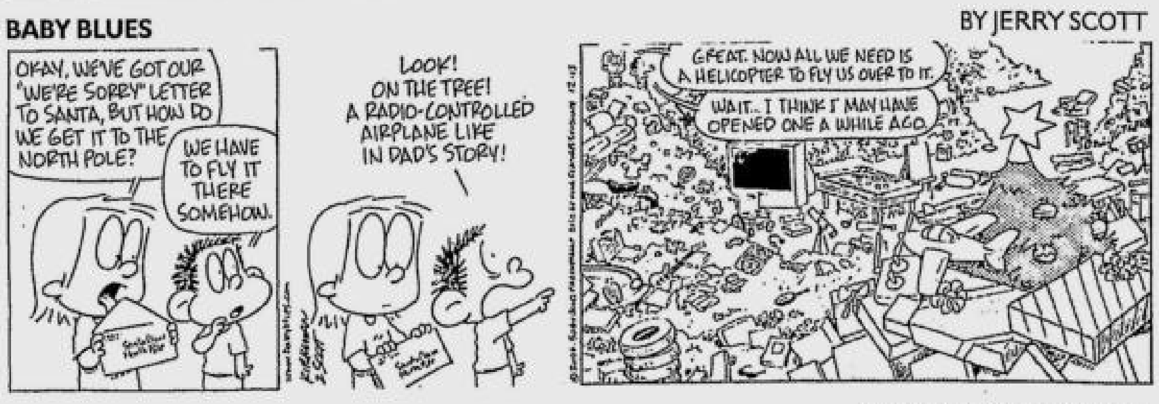
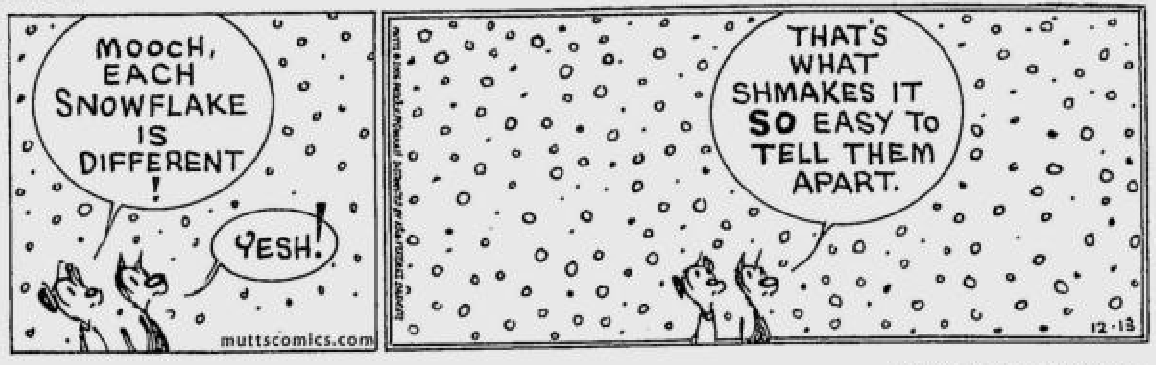
FOXTROT BY BILL AMEND


HOW CAN EATING TOO MANY COOKIES TURN US INTO COOKIES?
I DON'T KNOW.
MAYBE MOM USED SOME WEIRD INGREDIENTS THAT CAUSED A FREAK CHEMICAL REACTION.
YOU TOOK CHEMISTRY LAST YEAR... UNDO IT!
PAIGE, THIS IS LIKE A COLLEGE-LEVEL PROBLEM!
12-13 AMEND

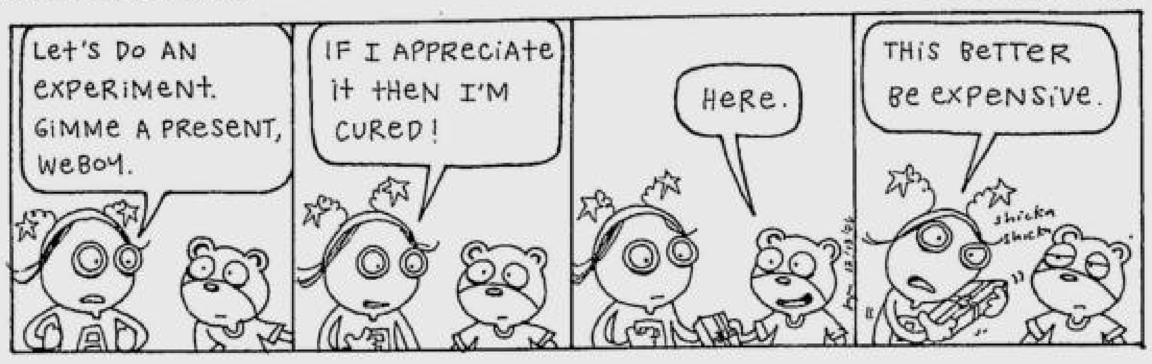
BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT


OKAY, WE'VE GOT OUR "WE'RE SORRY" LETTER TO SANTA, BUT HOW DO WE GET IT TO THE NORTH POLE?
WE HAVE TO FLY IT THERE SOMEHOW.
LOOK! ON THE TREE! A RADIO-CONTROLLED AIRPLANE LIKE IN DAD'S STORY!
GREAT. NOW ALL WE NEED IS A HELICOPTER TO FLY US OVER TO IT.
WAIT... I THINK I MAY HAVE OPENED ONE A WHILE AGO.

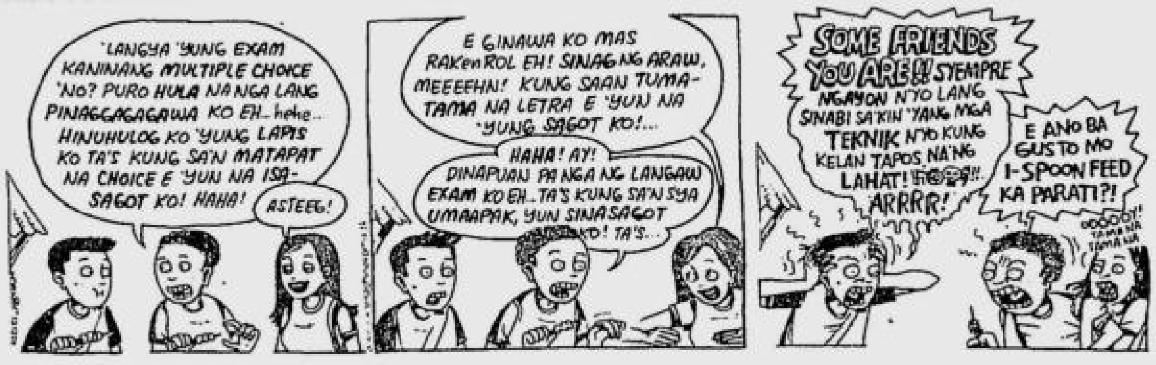
MUTTS BY PATRICK McDONNELL


MOOCH, EACH SNOWFLAKE IS DIFFERENT!
YESH!
THAT'S WHAT SHMAKES IT SO EASY TO TELL THEM APART.
muttscomics.com
12-13

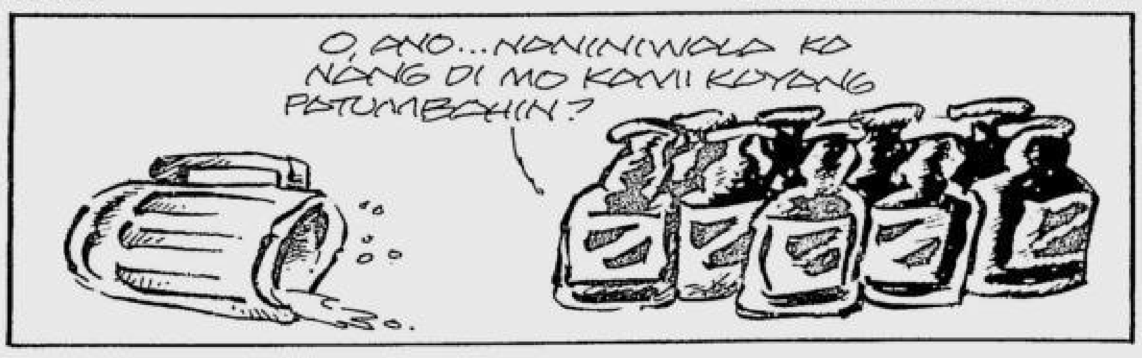
ATOMO AND WEBOY BY LYRA GARCELLANO


Let's Do AN experiment. Gimme A PResent, WeBoy.
IF I APPReciAte it tHeN I'M CuReD!
Here.
THis BeTTeR Be exPensive.
shicka shicka

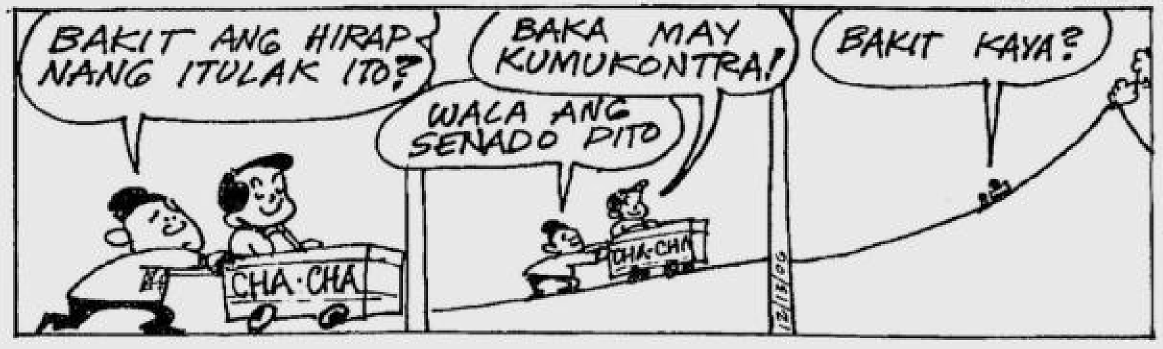
KIKO MACHINE BY MANIX ABRERA


'LANGYA 'YUNG EXAM KANINANG MULTIPLE CHOICE 'NO? PURO HULA NA NGA LANG PINAGGAGAGAWA KO EH...hehe.. HINUHULOG KO 'YUNG LAPIS KO TA'S KUNG SA'N MATAPAT NA CHOICE E 'YUN NA ISASAGOT KO! HAHA!
ASTEEG!
E GINAWA KO MAS RAKenROL EH! SINAG NG ARAW, MEEEEHN! KUNG SAAN TUMATAMA NA LETRA E 'YUN NA 'YUNG SAGOT KO!...
HAHA! AY! DINAPUAN PA NGA NG LANGAW EXAM KO EH...TA'S KUNG SA'N SYA UMAAPAK, YUN SINASAGOT KO! TA'S...
SOME FRIENDS YOU ARE!! SYEMPRE NGAYON N'YO LANG SINABI SA'KIN 'YANG MGA TEKNIK N'YO KUNG KELAN TAPOS NA'NG LAHAT! ARRRR!
E ANO BA GUSTO MO I-SPOON FEED KA PARATI?!

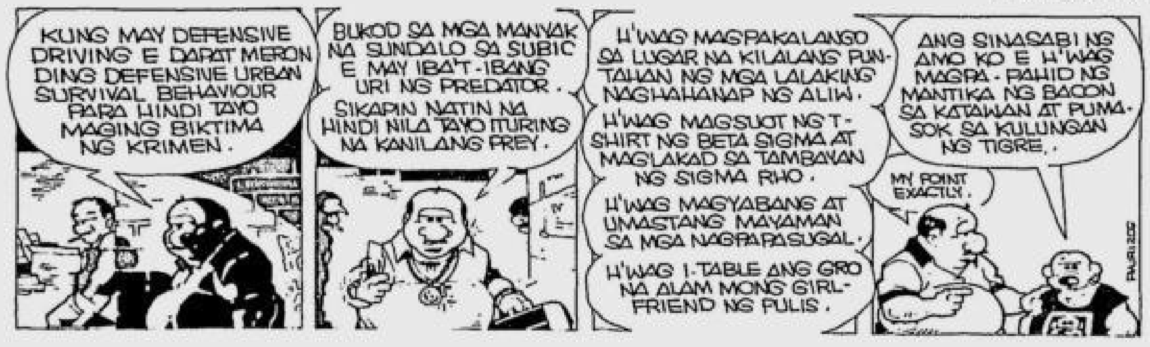
TULDOK BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


O, ANO... NANINIWALA KO NANG DI MO KAMI KAYANG PATUMBAHIN?

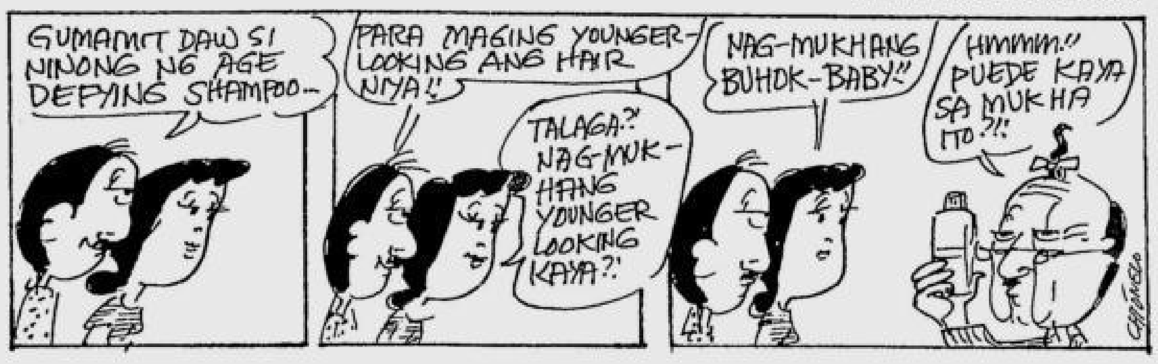
A. LIPIN BY JESS ABRERA


BAKIT ANG HIRAP NANG ITULAK ITO?
CHA-CHA
BAKA MAY KUMUKONTRA!
WALA ANG SENADO PITO
CHA-CHA
BAKIT KAYA?
12/13/06

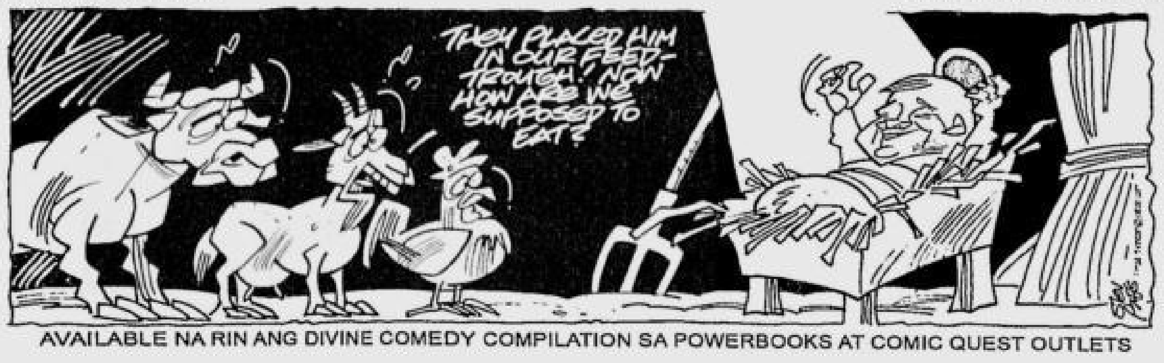
PUGAD BABOY BY P.M. JUNIOR


KUNG MAY DEFENSIVE DRIVING E DAPAT MERON DING DEFENSIVE URBAN SURVIVAL BEHAVIOUR PARA HINDI TAYO MAGING BIKTIMA NG KRIMEN.
BUKOD SA MGA MANYAK NA SUNDALO SA SUBIC E MAY IBA'T-IBANG URI NG PREDATOR.
SIKAPIN NATIN NA HINDI NILA TAYO ITURING NA KANILANG PREY.
H'WAG MAGPAKALANGO SA LUGAR NA KILALANG PUNTAHAN NG MGA LALAKING NAGHAHANAP NG ALIW.
H'WAG MAGSUOT NG T-SHIRT NG BETA SIGMA AT MAGLAKAD SA TAMBAYAN NG SIGMA RHO.
H'WAG MAGYABANG AT UMASTANG MAYAMAN SA MGA NAGPAPASUGAL.
H'WAG I-TABLE ANG GRO NA ALAM MONG GIRLFRIEND NG PULIS.
ANG SINASABI NG AMO KO E H'WAG MAGPA-PAHID NG MANTIKA NG BACON SA KATAWAN AT PUMASOK SA KULUNGAN NG TIGRE.
MY POINT EXACTLY.

LOVEKNOTS BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO

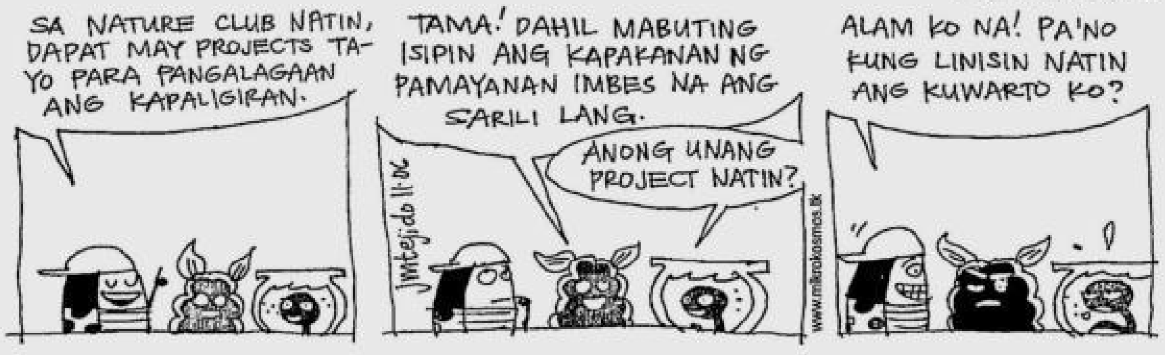

GUMAMIT DAW SI NINONG NG AGE DEFYING SHAMPOO...
PARA MAGING YOUNGER-LOOKING ANG HAIR NIYA!!
TALAGA?! NAG-MUKHANG YOUNGER LOOKING KAYA?!
NAG-MUKHANG BUHOK-BABY!!
HMMMM!! PUEDE KAYA SA MUKHA ITO?!!

DIVINE COMEDY BY STEVEN PABALINAS

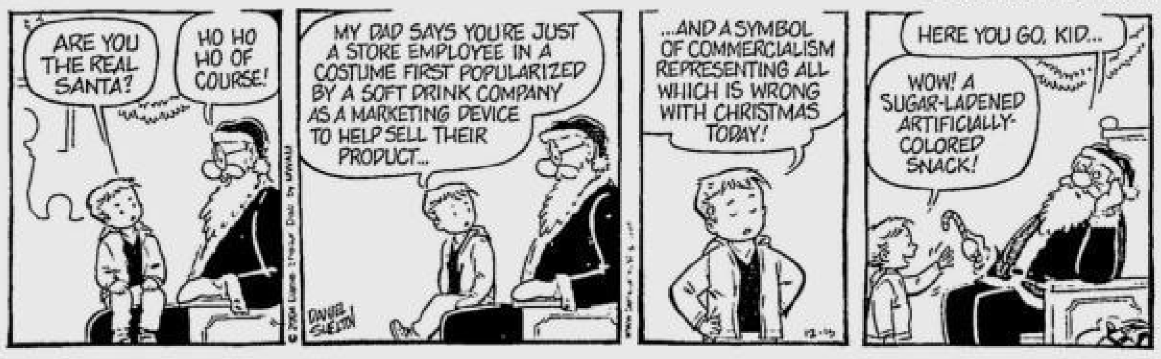

THEY PLACED HIM IN OUR FEED-TROUGH?! NOW HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED TO EAT?

AVAILABLE NA RIN ANG DIVINE COMEDY COMPILATION SA POWERBOOKS AT COMIC QUEST OUTLETS

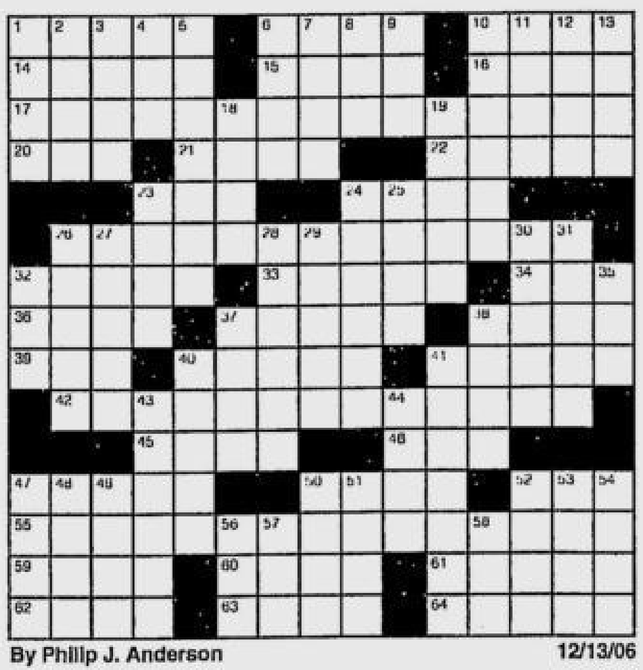
MIKROKOSMOS BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


SA NATURE CLUB NATIN, DAPAT MAY PROJECTS TAYO PARA PANGALAGAAN ANG KAPALIGIRAN.
TAMA! DAHIL MABUTING ISIPIN ANG KAPAKANAN NG PAMAYANAN IMBES NA ANG SARILI LANG.
ANONG UNANG PROJECT NATIN?
JMTejido 11-06
www.mikrokosmos.tk
ALAM KO NA! PA'NO KUNG LINISIN NATIN ANG KUWARTO KO?

BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON


ARE YOU THE REAL SANTA?
HO HO HO OF COURSE!
MY DAD SAYS YOU'RE JUST A STORE EMPLOYEE IN A COSTUME FIRST POPULARIZED BY A SOFT DRINK COMPANY AS A MARKETING DEVICE TO HELP SELL THEIR PRODUCT...
...AND A SYMBOL OF COMMERCIALISM REPRESENTING ALL WHICH IS WRONG WITH CHRISTMAS TODAY!
HERE YOU GO, KID...
WOW! A SUGAR-LADENED ARTIFICIALLY-COLORED SNACK!
DANIEL SHELTON

DAILY CROSSWORD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64

By Philip J. Anderson
Portland, OR
12/13/06

ACROSS

1 Michelangelo masterpiece
6 Light source
10 Smelting refuse
14 Wide tie
15 On the Aegean
16 Pop
17 Two horses
20 Writer Follett
21 Hornet's relative
22 Irregularly notched
23 Needle-nosed fish
24 Innermost part
26 Two horses
32 Attu resident
33 Church areas
34 Hodges of baseball
36 Marsh bird
37 Violent anger
38 Soul's partner?
39 Ill. neighbor
40 More tender
41 City in a WWI song
42 Two horses
45 Butts
46 Ms. Thurman
47 Up and about
50 Upolu Island city
52 Nav. non-com
55 Two horses
59 Statuesque
60 Neighboring planet
61 Goof
62 Torah holders
63 Bog material
64 Actress Diamond

DOWN

1 Load luggage
2 Man or Wight
3 Bus. sch. course
4 Tyke
5 Crosswise
6 Scottish miss
7 On-the-double letters
8 Stag party attendees
9 Steno book
10 Makes a basket
11 Gray wolf
12 Priestly vestments
13 Marvin of Motown
18 Lester's pickin' partner
19 Goat groups
23 Ancient European region
24 Prance about
25 Nonpareil
26 Trolley sound
27 Spyri's heroine
28 Buries in a tomb
29 Like some seals
30 Ancient bazaar
31 Broaden
32 "Exodus" hero
35 Caustic cleaner
37 Bubble mass
38 Lower California
40 Desolate
41 Salon gels
43 Pretentious add-ons
44 Total destruction
47 "The Thin Man" pooch
48 Have the lead
49 Converse
50 Taj Mahal location
51 Days of old
52 Sandburg or Sagan
53 Graduation ball
54 Gumbo ingredient
56 Little devil
57 Dundee denial
58 Doctor of music?

Tuesday's Puzzle Solved

A	P	E	S		N	C	I	S		A	D	M	I	T
M	A	L	A		O	H	N	O		D	R	A	K	E
A	P	O	D		E	O	N	S		H	A	G	E	N
N	Y	P	D	B	L	U	E		H	E	W	N		
D	R	E	A	R			R	O	A	R		U	F	O
A	I	R	M	A	S	S		C	R	E	A	M	E	R
				C	A	N	O	E	D		O	P	E	C
L	E	T	S		L	A	L	A	W		L	I	S	A
A	D	J	S		E	R	E	N	O	W				
L	E	H	A	V	R	E		S	N	O	R	E	R	S
O	N	O		E	N	D	S			R	A	T	O	N
		O	H	I	O		C	S	I	M	I	A	M	I
T	A	K	E	N		I	R	O	N		S	L	A	P
W	H	E	R	E		F	E	D	S		E	I	N	E
O	A	R	E	D		S	W	A	T		D	A	Y	S

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12/13/06

HOROSCOPE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're intelligent and very perceptive. You're excellent with details to the point of perfection. Many of you will finely hone your craft. You always take a long-range view of everything—your partnerships and your job. You have big ideas and major goals. Increased solitude this year will help you learn something important.
Birthdate of: Jamie Foxx, actor; Christopher Plummer, actor; Dick Van Dyke, actor.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): This is an excellent day to talk to partners, friends and members of the public. It's also an excellent day to do business. You feel positive and upbeat when talking to everyone.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): This is a good day for business and working with coworkers. Others are willing to give you the support—both practical and financial—that you need.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Your creative skills are hot today. Working with children, the arts and anything having to do with show business or the entertainment world will please you.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): This is a good day for family discussions. It's also a nice time to entertain at home or enjoy being by yourself in the privacy of your own world.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Your communication skills are wonderful today. This is a good day to teach, act, market, sell or persuade others to do what you want.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): This is an excellent day for business and commerce. You might see new ways of making money or new ways to expand your earnings (especially with travel or dealing with foreign countries).

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): This is a strong day for you. The Moon is in your sign. Furthermore, it makes a lovely aspect to moneybags Jupiter. Go after whatever you want: you just might get it!

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Seek out solitude today if you can. You need to have a little time by yourself. With so much going on in your life now, you need a bit of quiet reflection.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): A female friend wants to have a confidential conversation with you today. (Possibly, the reverse is true.) Either way, try to let this happen

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): For some reason, at some point today, people will notice you more than usual. Be aware of this. Conversations with parents or bosses are important today.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): This is a good day to make travel plans or explore further educational opportunities. Try to do something different so that you can expand your horizons a bit today.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): The wealth of others can benefit you today. In some manner, gifts and goodies are likely to fall in your lap. Just say "thank you." (How else can others be generous?)

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku by Dave Green

	7	9						
		8			2			6
				4			8	5
	6		5		9			
		5		2		6		
			3		4		7	
6	4			5				
5			7			3		
						8	5	

Difficulty Level ★★★ 12/13

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HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

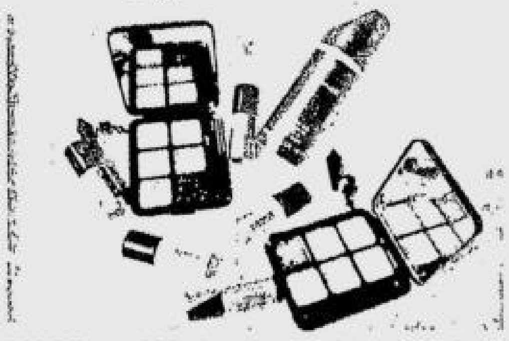
Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

8	5	6	1	9	7	3	4	2
7	4	9	3	2	8	5	1	6
1	2	3	5	6	4	7	8	9
3	8	1	7	4	9	2	6	5
2	6	4	8	3	5	1	9	7
5	9	7	2	1	6	4	3	8
6	7	8	4	5	1	9	2	3
9	1	2	6	7	3	8	5	4
4	3	5	9	8	2	6	7	1

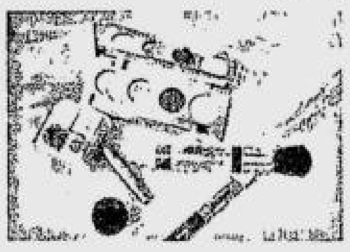
Difficulty Level ★★

OLD-WORLD elegance is the theme of Shu Uemura's "Grand Opera" collection



MAC Formal Black collection (above) and The Body Shop's Winter Trend (below)

PHOTOS BY BIANCA CONSUNJI



MAKEUP: XENG ZULUETA, CHIEF MAKEUP ARTIST FOR SHU UEMURA PHILIPPINES
HAIR: FELICITY SON USING KIEHL'S STYLIST SERIES
MODELS: ABBIE ALMASCO AND JOY HENDRICKSON

for golden holidays

From page E1

cent silver and canary yellow).

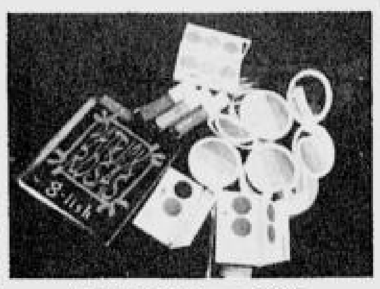
There are also two shades of blush, Rose Marble (desert rose and soft amber) and Sienna Marble (golden brown and sand), and two shades of lipstick: shimmery plum and coppered nude.

Have too much makeup already? You can invest on a limited-edition makeup brush set, which includes brushes for powder, blush, eyeshadow and lipstick.

To add a touch of luxury to the collection, Shu Uemura is offering two sets of false lashes this season: the black Shimmer Brocade lashes, which are trimmed with gold thread, and the Gleam Tassels lashes (a string of gold and silver lashes that can be cut and shaped to suit the wearer.)

Lancôme Crystal Eve Holiday

Lancôme's holiday collection is all about glamour and glitz with its purple-and-blue hues. With two limited-edition palettes (Diamond Soirée has purple and blue hues, while Embellished has more natural creams and pinks), a Lip Gelee, lipstick and Juicy Tube set decked out in its jazzy theme, this collection is sure to thrill collectors and makeup lovers alike.



PATRICK Rosas 2006 holiday collection

Lancôme's Crystal Eve Juicy Tubes set come with a charm bracelet that you can attach the miniature glosses to, a great gift for high school or college students.

The colors are raspberry-flavored Crystal Shine (translucent with sparkles), grapefruit Hypnotic Sapphire (lilac with pink sparkles), and cherry Bewitching Ruby (shimmery pink gloss).

The eyeshadow compacts come with wrist straps and tassels reminiscent of 1920s purses, perfect for toting along to the powder room.

Mac Formal Black and Holiday Dress sets

It's hard to pick a single item from MAC's holiday collection: inspired by various fabrics and patterns, this year's palettes and makeup sets can be worn to both the office and raging Christmas parties.

The holiday palettes dubbed "Formal Black" are covered with various fabrics: velvet, lace, sudette, eyelet and satin.

Check out the Lace Warm Eyes palette, which contains six cream, pink and brown eyeshadows for everyday use, and Sudette Intense Eyes palette, which has six colors (frosted white, black with red flecks, pearlized purple, aqua blue, lime green and rose pink) which can be used on their own or mixed with safe base colors, depending on the occasion.

Also check out the Mac Dress Sets which are cased sets of lip products (such as the Lip Gelee and Lipglass), pigments and shadesticks.

The Warm Pigment Dress Set contains some of Mac's most popular pigment shades such as Vanilla, Pink Bronze, Tan, Old Gold and Chartreuse—great for neophytes who want to try more of the brand's products without shelling out too much.

You might also want to check out the miniature brush sets, which cost a fraction of the price of the regular size brushes.

Patrick Rosas Holiday 2006

Patrick Rosas is one of the fashion industry's most sought-after makeup artists for a reason: He can make just about anyone look and feel gorgeous. However, it can be difficult to book him because of his numerous shoots, fashion shows and rather exclusive fees.

Now, beauty fanatics can have a piece of his makeup artistry though his self-named line by makeup company G-Lish (which made a name for itself for creating affordable, top-quality makeup in a wide range of colors).

The Patrick Rosas Holiday 2006 collection consists of three eyeshadow palettes, three glosses and three blush compacts.

The eyeshadow palettes can be used to create three completely different looks: go smoky with PRG-E 001 (icy white, steel gray and coal black); wild with PRG-E 002 (orchid pink, cornflower blue and forest green); or natural with PRG-E 003 (cream, chestnut and chocolate brown).

The blush compacts have three shades of color in each pan, which you can use individually or swirl together for a natural pop of color.

PRG-B 001 is a blend of berry hues, PRG-B 002 is terracotta-colored, while PRG-B 003 can be used as a bronzer.

The lip glosses, which come in mauve, pale pink and a golden-pink shade that is a dead ringer for NARS Orgasm gloss, glide on smoothly and can be worn over darker lipstick shades for a more dramatic effect.

The Body Shop Winter Trend

Palettes are fun holiday gifts because they're practical—they contain several shades that you can play around with, and are usually cheaper than buying several individual colors.

This year, The Body Shop offers two palettes with three eyeshadow shades and one blush: Eye and Cheek Palette 04 contains nude peach, mint green and rich bronze eyeshadows, and a shimmery pink blush.

Palette 03 has frosty lilac, silver-gray and deep-purple eyeshadows, and a bright pink blush with gold flecks.

Aside from palettes, The Body Shop also offers other cosmetics in their holiday collection. The Shimmer Cube 12 has four pots of pigment in a clear plastic case: Twilight Black, Sunrise Pink, Sunset Berry and Starlight Gold; the Glitter Eye Liner is filled with eye-safe silver glitter for a rock-star look; and the Sheer Cranberry Lip Duo has a frosty mauve shade on one side and pale pink gloss on the other.

You can finish off the look with a dusting of the deliciously scented Cranberry Brilliance Powder.

Becca

Popular Australian brand Becca is finally in the Philippines. Well-known for its sheer foundations, the brand also has a slew of other products that give a healthy, luminous look.

Worth checking out are the Luminous Skin Color, Loose Finishing Powder, Stick Foundation with SPF 30, Jewel Dust eyeshadow (they look like ice cubes filled with color), and creme blush, which won several awards from Allure magazine.

Any diehard beauty fanatic will be glad to receive makeup from Becca.

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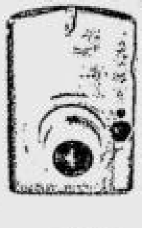

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FLORAL dress with ruffled neckline and pink petticoat by Tatah Galias

Bring out the girly girl in your friends or siblings with pretty cupcakes and pastries, luxurious makeup and feminine dresses

CORSET top with ruffles, polka-dot skirt and petticoat by Tatah Galias (0920-9268272); bracelet and earrings by Happy David

FOR ASPIRING PRINCESSES

Frills, froth and frippery

Text by Bianca Consunji
2bU! Correspondent
Photos by Sara Black

MARIE ANTOINETTE WAS a trendsetter in her day. She made the pouf (a high hairdo powdered and decorated with ribbons), the English countryside look, and other elaborate gowns fashionable in France, her adopted country.

When Sofia Coppola's "Marie Antoinette" (starring Kirsten Dunst) hit the silver screen a couple of months ago, critics gave it mixed reviews, but the fashion industry went nuts over the clothes and shoes featured in the movie. Manolo Blahnik made hundreds of shoes for the film. The women also dressed in period costumes done in pastel hues.

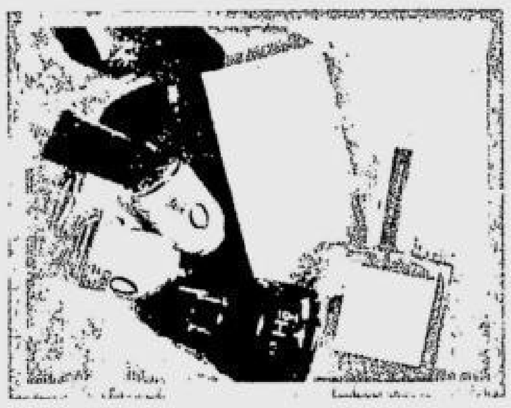
Although it's next to impossible to get Manolo Blahnik shoes or wear voluminous gowns in the Philippines, you can still give your fashion-loving friends Marie Antoinette-inspired gifts. Bring out the girly girl in your friends or siblings with pretty cupcakes and pastries, luxurious makeup and feminine dresses.

Let them eat cake

Cupcakes by Sonja are almost too pretty to eat. Choose from flavors such as Peppermint Patty, Peanut Butter and Jelly, Vanilla Surprise, Valhrona Chocolate, Red Velvet Vixen, or Strawberries and Cream, among many others. Sonja Ocampo, who worked with the famous Magnolia Bakery in New York, will be glad to help you choose flavors from the extensive list, and she also does special orders.

For our shoot, she created Red Velvet Vixen cupcakes decorated with edible Marie Antoinette buttons on top. You can also request to have the store closed for private parties—just you, a group of good friends, and all the cupcakes you want: now that's pure revelry.

Contact Cupcakes by Sonja at 8560308 or visit 1C03 Serendra Piazza, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig. You can also e-mail cupcakesbysonja@gmail.com



GO girly with Clean Baby Girl and Ralph Hot perfume and Orly nail polish. BIANCA CONSUNJI

PERFECT curls are one step away with Curls Rock by Tigi Catwalk. BIANCA CONSUNJI

Multicolored macarons

Brightly colored macarons from French bakery Ladurée figured prominently in "Marie Antoinette." A box of the meringue-and-cream pastries from Bizu would also make a heavenly gift for sweet lovers and girly girls alike. Choose from flavors such as pistachio, raspberry, rose, orange and lemon for a multicolored treat.

Ruffles and lace

2bU! asked up-and-coming designer Tatah Galias to interpret the modern-day Marie Antoinette. He came up with three different dresses: a fluffy pink-and-white dress trimmed with lace and tulle, a more subdued two-piece corset and skirt in brown and cream, and a floral dress with a full skirt.

"A lot of dresses at that time used wallpaper-type print," Tatah explained. "The clothes were romantic and elaborate. The clothes were either bejeweled and heavy, or countryside-inspired, which called for lighter fabric."

While the dresses Tatah made could be worn on their own, he also left room for full petticoats. "The dresses can be worn to parties without looking too dressy, but if you're not afraid to stand out or go for a costumed effect, wear petticoats under them," he said. "This is good especially for the holidays, where you want to look more special than usual."

"The Marie Antoinette look is becoming popular with high-school girls for the prom. A lot of them are asking for elaborate pastel gowns, and aren't afraid to experiment."

Like the dresses? Contact Tatah at 0920-9268272.

Spritz on the scent

Skip the musty old florals and hop on to a scent that smells young and sweet. We like Clean Baby Girl, which smells like baby powder and florals with a hint of lemon.

Also try Ralph Hot (which has notes of cinnamon and maple, just like dessert) and Lancôme Hypnose, which in its gilded purple bottle, looks great on your dresser.

WHITE lace and tulle dress with pink appliqué by Tatah Galias; earrings and bracelet by Happy David

Curly locks

Where would a Marie Antoinette wannabe be without cascading curls? If you've been wanting curly hair, try a soft digital perm for natural-looking, bouncy waves. Try Louis Philip Kee of Razzle Dazzle Salon in Legaspi Village, Makati, for the best digiperm in town. Call 8482388 or 8402880. If you want to make your already curly hair more luscious, try Tigi Catwalk Curls Rock products for perfectly defined curls. We like their hair spray, leave-in conditioner and curl amplifier.

MAKEUP: XENG ZULUETA, CHIEF MAKEUP ARTIST OF SHU UEMURA PHILIPPINES, USING THE PARADOX SPRING/SUMMER 2007 COLLECTION.
HAIR: FELICITY SON, USING KIEHL'S STYLIST SERIES
MODELS: CAMILLE CRUZ AND JOY HENDRICKSON
SHOT AT CUPCAKES BY SONJA, SERENDRA
SPECIAL THANKS TO MS SONJA OCAMPO

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SONJA can put in decorations of your choice on the cupcakes, like these Red Velvet Vixens with edible Marie Antoinette buttons.

BIZU'S macaroons are a traditional Parisian treat.

ENTERTAINMENT

Editor **Emmie G. Velarde**

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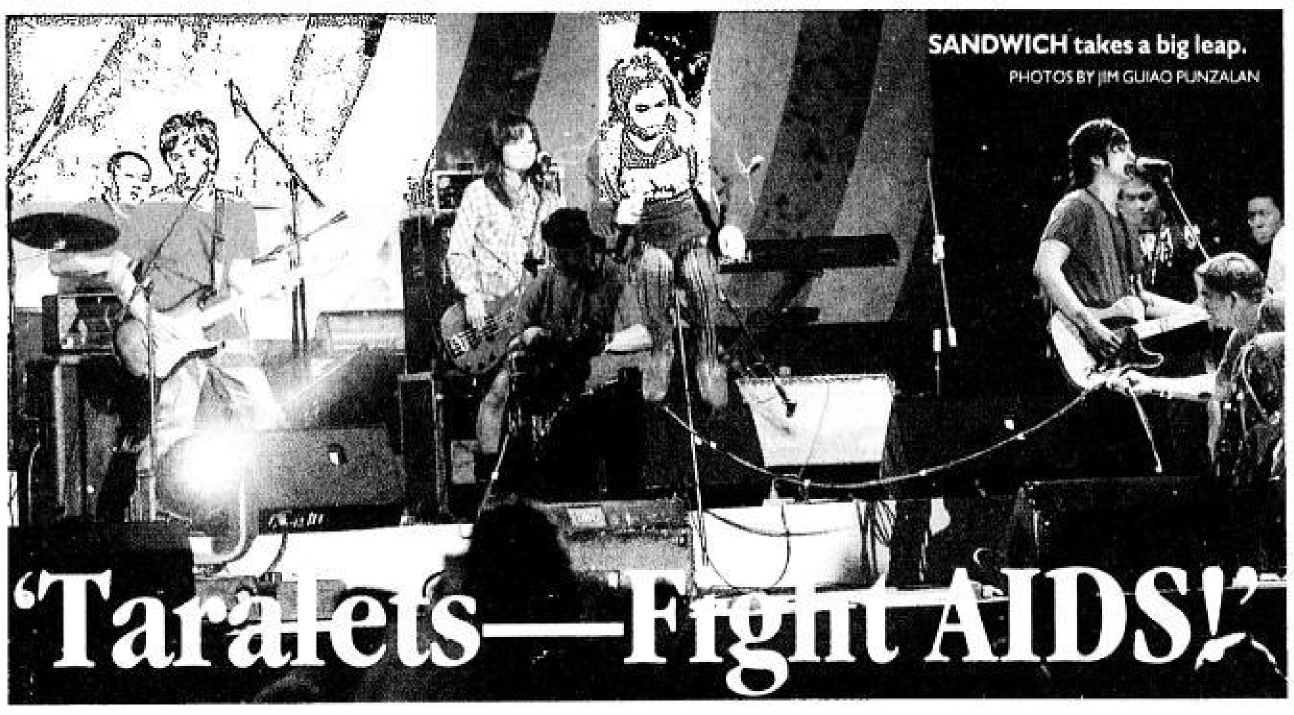

SANDWICH takes a big leap.
PHOTOS BY JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

'Taralets—Fight AIDS!'

By Pocholo Concepcion
Contributor

REVIEW

PINOY R&B ARTIST JAY-R WAS reportedly so nervous backstage, that the emcees had to ask the crowd to show some courtesy. Actor Jericho Rosales tried singing like a rocker and ended up being a poor copy of Bamboo. But Gary Valenciano proved he could win over a very discriminating audience—yes, even punks at the mosh pit.

These were some of the oddities observed at the MTV Music Summit 2006 for HIV/AIDS held recently at the Bonifacio Global City Open Field, Taguig.

Some 50 bands played before an estimated 50,000 people—some of whom waved banners indicating the place and group they rep-

'TARALETS'/ F4

INSIDE

What is Richard Gomez giving some friends for Christmas? Presents that he himself crafted. /F2

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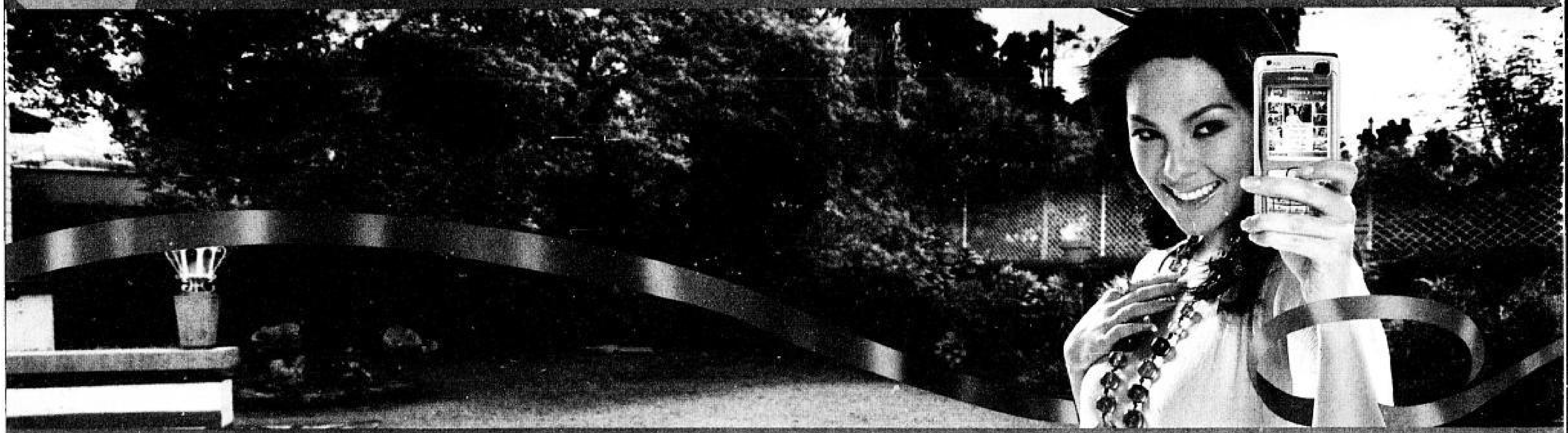

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PER DTI-NCR NO. 5351, SERIES OF 2006

NOKIA Nseries

opo, ang lakas mo sa Globe

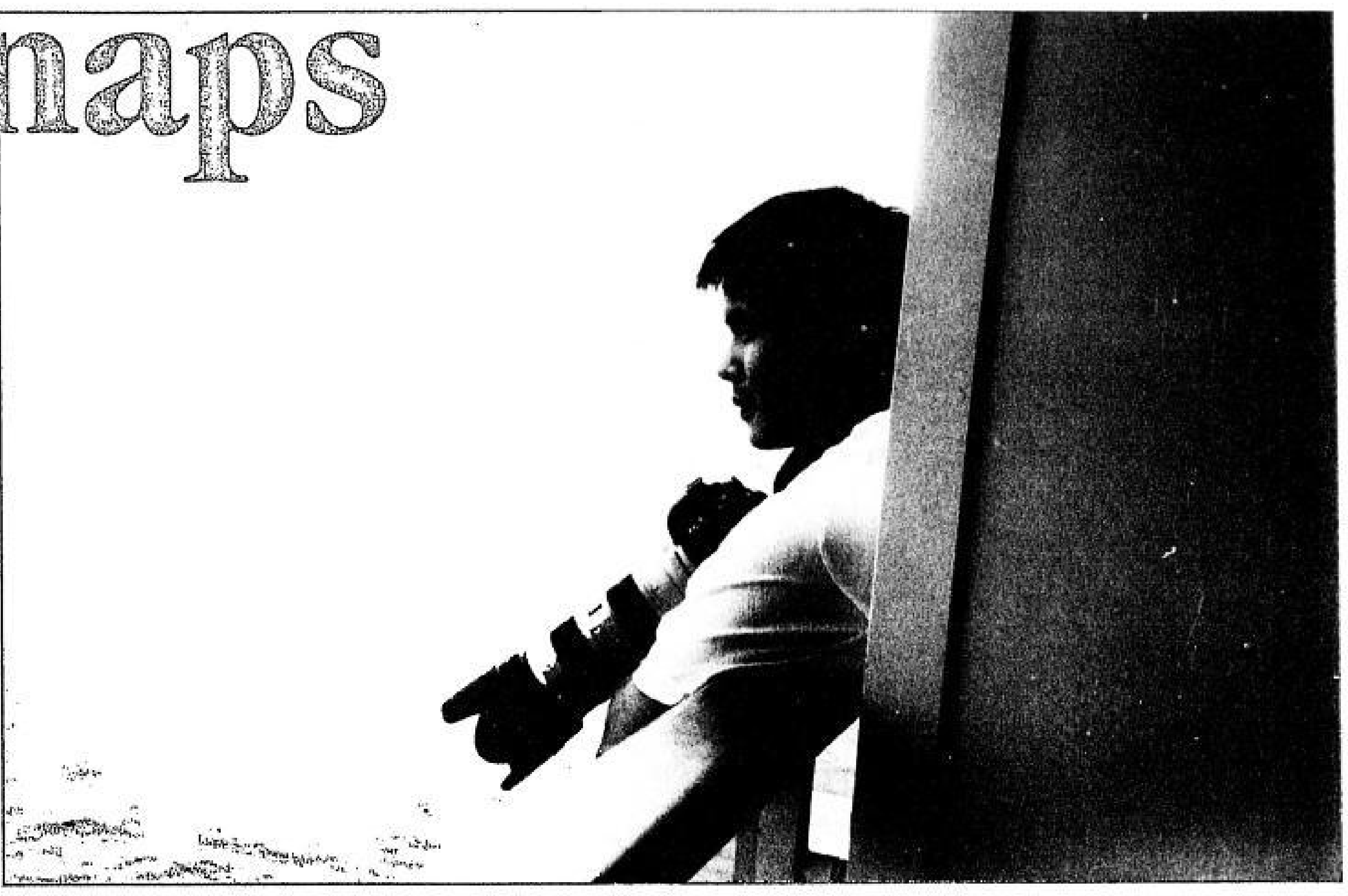
When Goma snaps

By Bayani San Diego Jr.
Photos by Richard Gomez

IN HIS DESIRE TO GIVE UNIQUE holiday gifts, Richard Gomez gets up close and personal.

The actor-TV host has decided to give friends and colleagues dramatic black-and-white photographs he had taken of them, often without their knowledge—on the sets of his GMA 7 sitcom "Lagot Ka, Isusumbong Kita" and *fantaserye* "Captain Barbell" and backstage at the Bench fashion show at the Araneta Coliseum.

Goma told INQUIRER Entertainment that



RAYMART Santiago is a fellow shutterbug, says Goma.

INQUIRER EXCLUSIVE

JOEY Marquez has been a friend for so long that he's very much at ease in his portraits by Richard.

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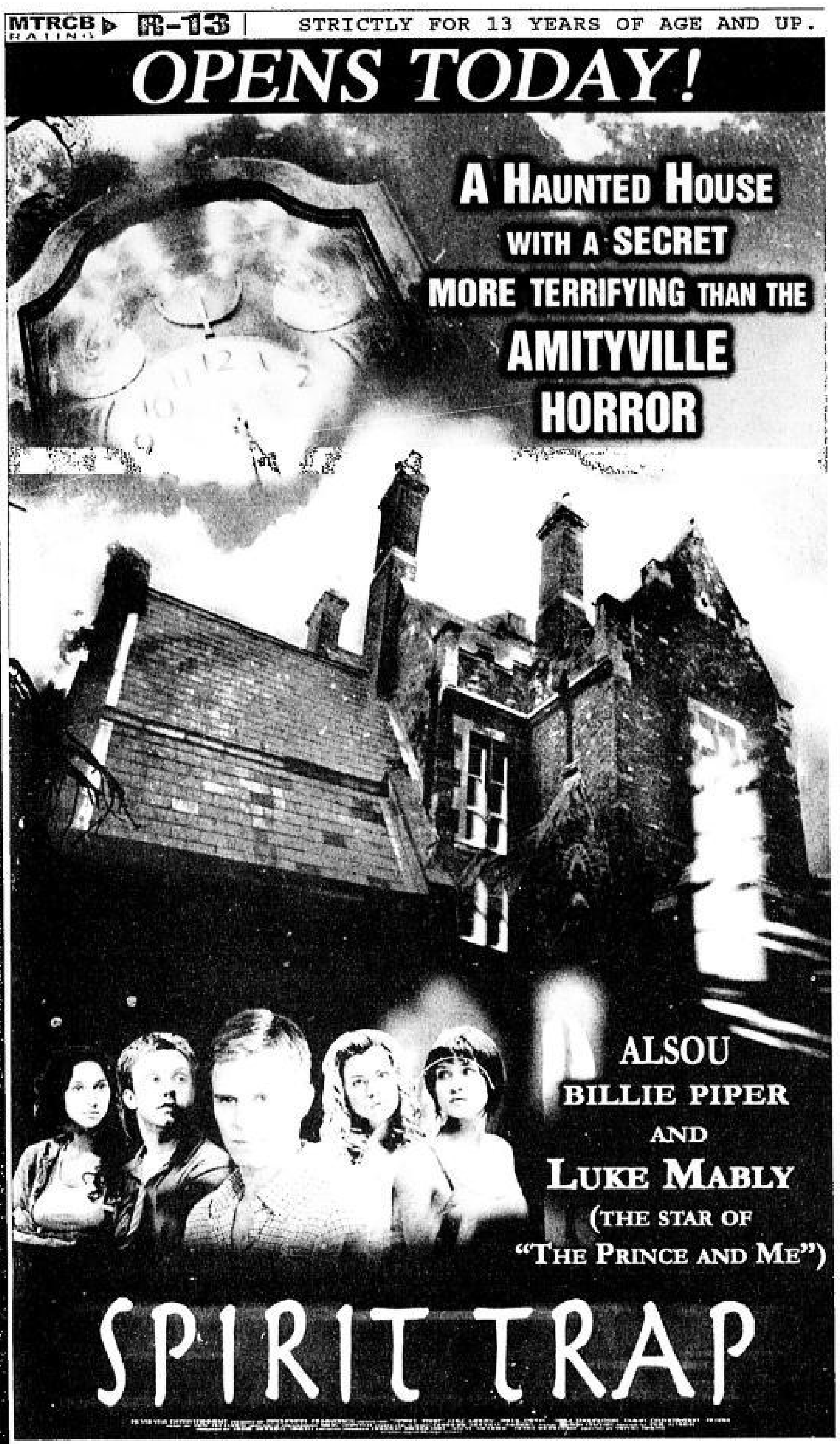

A HAUNTED HOUSE WITH A SECRET MORE TERRIFYING THAN THE AMITYVILLE HORROR
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AND
LUKE MABLY
(THE STAR OF "THE PRINCE AND ME")
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OPENING TODAY

From page F4

Sam Troughton, Emma Catherwood, Kitt Smith

Directed by David Smith

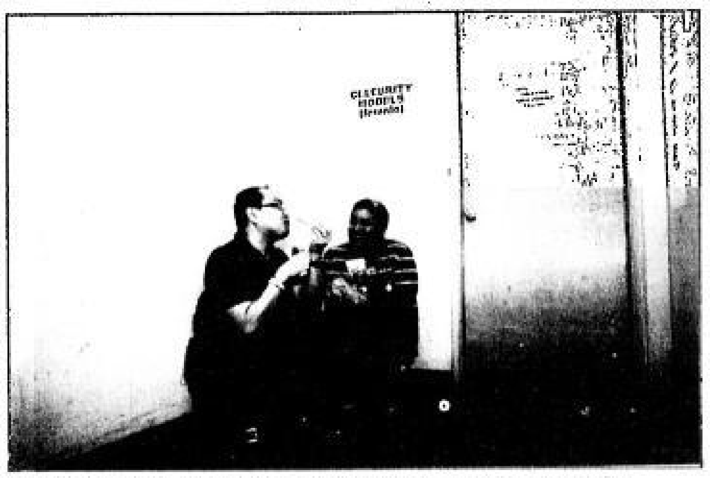
Five students, one of whom is a psychic (Piper), move into a decrepit house with a murderous history. They quickly find themselves battling evil spirits. Rich Cline of Shadowsonthewall.com opines that "there's nothing original in this teen thriller … but a high energy level and a willingness to go way over the top makes it quite entertaining." Empire magazine grades it two stars (out of five): "While the director has an eye for an attractive shot, he lacks the ability to orchestrate an effective shock." Anthro Fred of Slasherpool.com complains that it's "unoriginal and very predictable. [It] isn't an awful movie, but it's not a good one either."

Shaolin vs. Evil Dead 2

Stars Gordon Liu

Directed by Douglas Kung

Teeming with hopping vampires and undead midgets, this chopsocky-horror hybrid is touted as the "final battle between good and evil" and top-bills Liu, star of "Kill Bill Vols. 1 and 2." Solacecinema.com enthuses: "It looks utterly insane and has obviously stolen lots of nice pieces from other films." Kyonsi.com rates it "a must-see … This one has it all. Like an updated version of 'Mr. Vampire.'" Kfccinema.com says it "brings back the *Kyonsi* (Chinese vampire) genre back to life. [It's] the light at the end of the tunnel." According to the Brussels International Festival of Fantastic Film website: "[It] lives up to its title … the director has put together the ideal midnight movie experience."



FASHION designers Randy Ortiz and Rajo Laurel chat while snacking outside the ladies' dressing room at the Araneta Coliseum.

HE TOOK "Barbell" director Dominic Zapata's photo at 8 a.m. on the set of the *fantaserye*.

each photo tells a story and, hopefully, has captured the subject's personality.

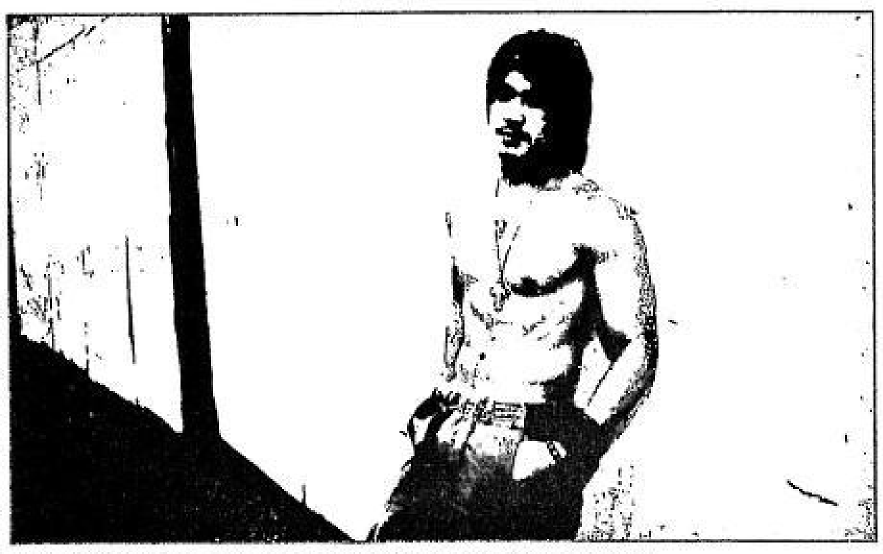
He caught "Lagot Ka" cast-mates Raymart Santiago and Joey Marquez in unguarded moments during their Asian cruise.

Fashion designers Rajo Laurel and Randy Ortiz were snapped while snacking on ice cream backstage at the Big Dome.

"I like capturing rare moments like that, so I always have my Mamiya RB67 camera on hand," Goma explained. "You'll never know when you'll come across a special shot."

He said he also works with Canon and Sony digital cameras and prefers "available light."

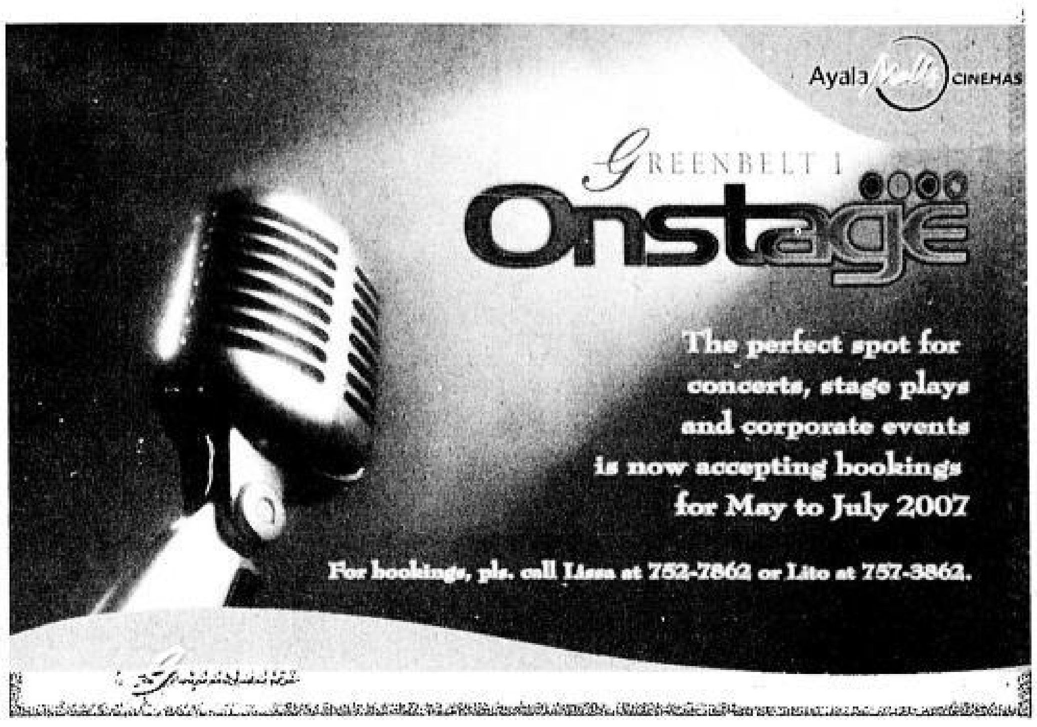
As we go to press, he is having these photos framed and wrapped up.



DIETHER Ocampo strikes a pose for his fellow Bench model.

NOT EVEN famously camera-shy manager Douglas Quijano could escape Goma's lens.

'You'll never know when you'll come across a great moment'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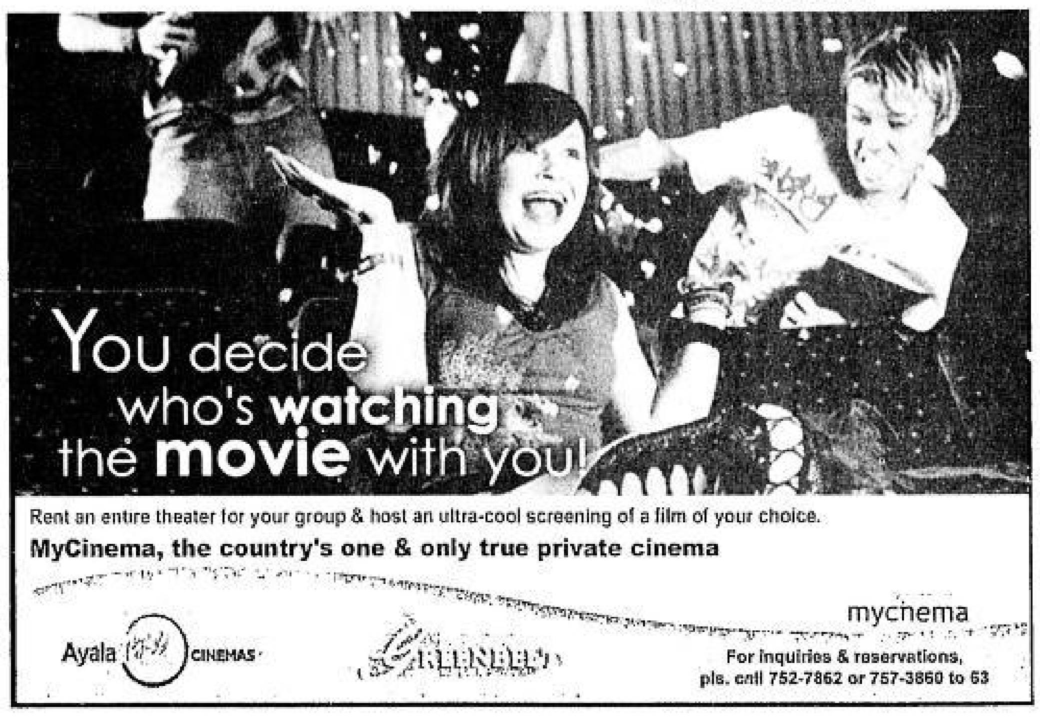
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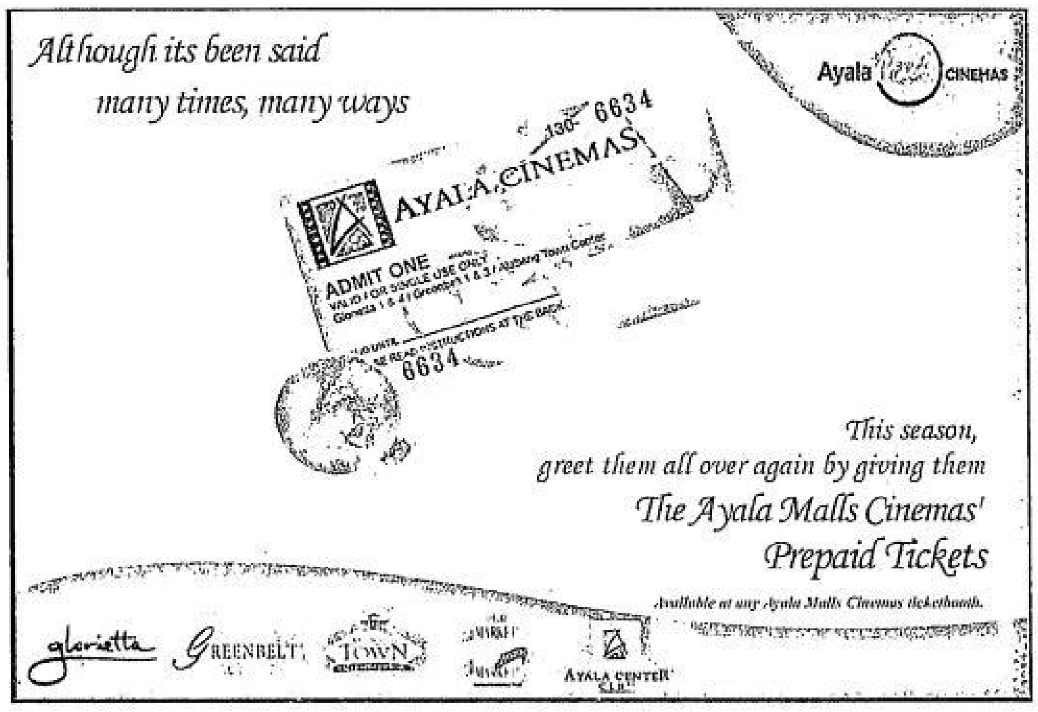
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	3 CASINO ROYALE 2:15, 5:05, 7:55, 10:45 GUARANTEED SEATS	4 ALL THE KING'S MEN 1:30, 4:00, 6:30, 9:00, 11:20 GUARANTEED SEATS	5 THE NATIVITY 2:55, 5:00, 7:05, 9:10, 11:15 GUARANTEED SEATS	
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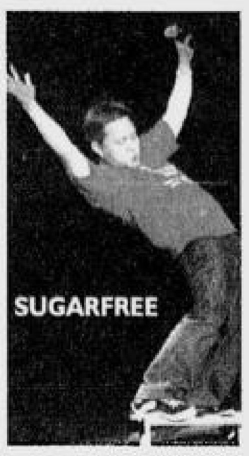
'Taralets—Fight AIDS!'

From page F1

resented. A few of these banners—"San Mateo Slameros," "Durugista ng Las Piñas"—were quite blatant. But these were exactly the kind of freewheeling teenagers that the concert hoped to reach out to, to bring home the message that AIDS could hit them if they're not careful.

In the Philippines, there are 2,500 confirmed cases of HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. The disease has claimed more than 25 million lives in 25 years worldwide. Nearly 40 million have HIV/AIDS today.

At the MTV event, the bands had their hands full keeping the restless crowd entertained. The ones that provoked their senses with a punk attitude were the biggest hits.


SUGARFREE

Sandwich was a good example, with front man Raimund Marasigan skillfully working up the stage with an energetic performance of "DVD X" and "Sugod." It was like Johnny Rotten springing back to life in the days of the Sex Pistols, except that Marasigan was so gentlemanly in the end: "*Ingatan ang mga babae sa* audience … *Yung mga nahuhulog, pupulutin* …"

Up Dharma Down's jazz-tinged number seemed on the verge of boring people, but the soulful wailing of keyboardist/singer Armi Millare caught everyone's attention, providing a stark contrast to the detached look she projected with her Ray Ban aviator shades.

JERICHO ROSALES

KAMIKAZEE

for HIV/AIDS
MUS
MAYONNAISE

MTV
MUSIC TELEVISION
MOJOFLY

CINDY KURLETO

Imago's Aia de Leon looked like a waif flirting in super-tight jeans. We thought she would break her neck with those headstands that are so vogue these days. Thankfully she crawled back in one piece to say her piece: "*Taralets, labanan natin ang* AIDS!"

Rocksteddy was another group that played punk-driven music with pop lyrics. In an obvious nod to the Clash and other revered British acts of the late '70s, Rocksteddy's vocalist greeted the crowd by mouthing the catchphrase, "Oi, oi, oi, oi …"

Exhausted rocker

Colt 45 Rockista talent search winner Bojo, backed by Protein Shake, showed he had the guts to be taken seriously as a rock star wannabe. But it took him some time to answer questions by MTV VJs KC Montero and Marc Abaya, probably due to exhaustion, too many drinks, or he was simply dazed by the size of the crowd. All he could utter was, "No glove, no love!"

Jay-R was another artist who seemed overwhelmed by the sheer size and mindset of an obviously anti-pop audience. Abaya had to plead like someone preventing a riot: "Please lang, *kinakabahan si* Jay-R …" Well, the punks behaved and looked stoic as Jay-R put on an act that included gliding, as if through air.

Jericho Rosales appeared with his band called Jeans with a rap-metal tune that melted in non sequitur fashion, its lyrics referring to "Panday." Uh-huh.

Gary shows 'em

Gary Valenciano demonstrated how to impress an audience otherwise averse to hyperkinetic pop. So infectious was his energy that just one number, in which he rapped, scatted, played the timbales and danced, left the spectators open-mouthed.

The rest of the performers, notably Itchyworms, Sugarfree, Dicta License, Spongecola, Mig Ayesa and most especially Lokomotiv, were appreciated on account of the way they mixed the heavy twang of electric guitars with the words they were singing.

Lokomotiv, formed in the United States, had a Caucasian vocalist, former Razorback guitarist David Aguirre and ex-Wolfgang drummer Wolf Gemora in its lineup. It was a very loud and bombastic band in the tradition of Led Zeppelin—ironically the same band that personified the sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll lifestyle of music icons.

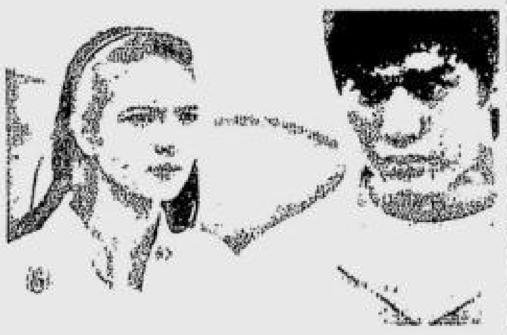
OPENING TODAY

Sa Ilalim ng Cogon

Stars Yul Servo, Julia Clarete

Directed by Rico Maria Ilarde

A former soldier (Servo) escapes from a bungled heist and hides in a mysterious mansion standing amid a sea of tall cogon grass. He then falls in love with the haunted home's waifish resident (Clarete). "A breath of fresh air in a horror scene gone stale," raves Pete Tombs, author of "Mondo Macabro." "Call it Philippine magical-realist noir," quips Chris Chang of Film Comment. "It's strikingly original," asserts Olaf Moller of Sensesofcinema.com. Exclusively at Robinsons Galleria Indiesine Cinema 8.



Barcelona

Stars Alessandra de Rossi, Luis Alandy, Alan Paule, Tina Paner, Robert Arevalo

Directed by Gil Portes

An enigmatic woman (De Rossi) travels to a Spanish city in search of her missing husband. Along the way, she meets a runaway groom (Alandy) and other overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) who tell different stories of "loss, despair and hope." Graded B by the Cinema Evaluation Board, this film is "highly recommended to OFWs and their families," according to its drumbeaters. It was also the lone Philippine entry in the Spanish Film Festival held in Manila, where it had its world premiere. Shot in Barcelona, Spain, it features various city landmarks like La Rambla, Sagrada Familia, Plaza Cataluña, among others. Exclusively in SM theaters nationwide.

Little Miss Sunshine

Stars Greg Kinnear, Alan Arkin, Steve Carell, Toni Collette, Abigail Breslin

Directed by Jonathan Dayton, Valerie Faris

A "quietly antic" dysfunctional family takes a nerve-wracking road trip, from Albuquerque to Redondo Beach, to enter 7-year-old Olive (Breslin) in a kiddie beauty pageant. Within hours of its premiere at Sundance, Fox Searchlight reportedly snagged this quirky comedy for worldwide distribution. David Rooney of Variety hails it for its "flawless cast, gentle spirit of rebellion and smart script." Peter Travers of Rolling Stone calls it a "scrappy human comedy that takes an honest path to laughs and is twice as funny and touching for it." Richard Schickel of Time points out: "It comes closer to the truth about the way people really live—on the edge of fantasy-driven desperation—than our sanctimonies permit us to think." Exclusively in Ayala Malls Cinemas.

Tenacious D: The Pick of Destiny

Stars Jack Black, Kyle Glass, Meat Loaf, Ben Stiller

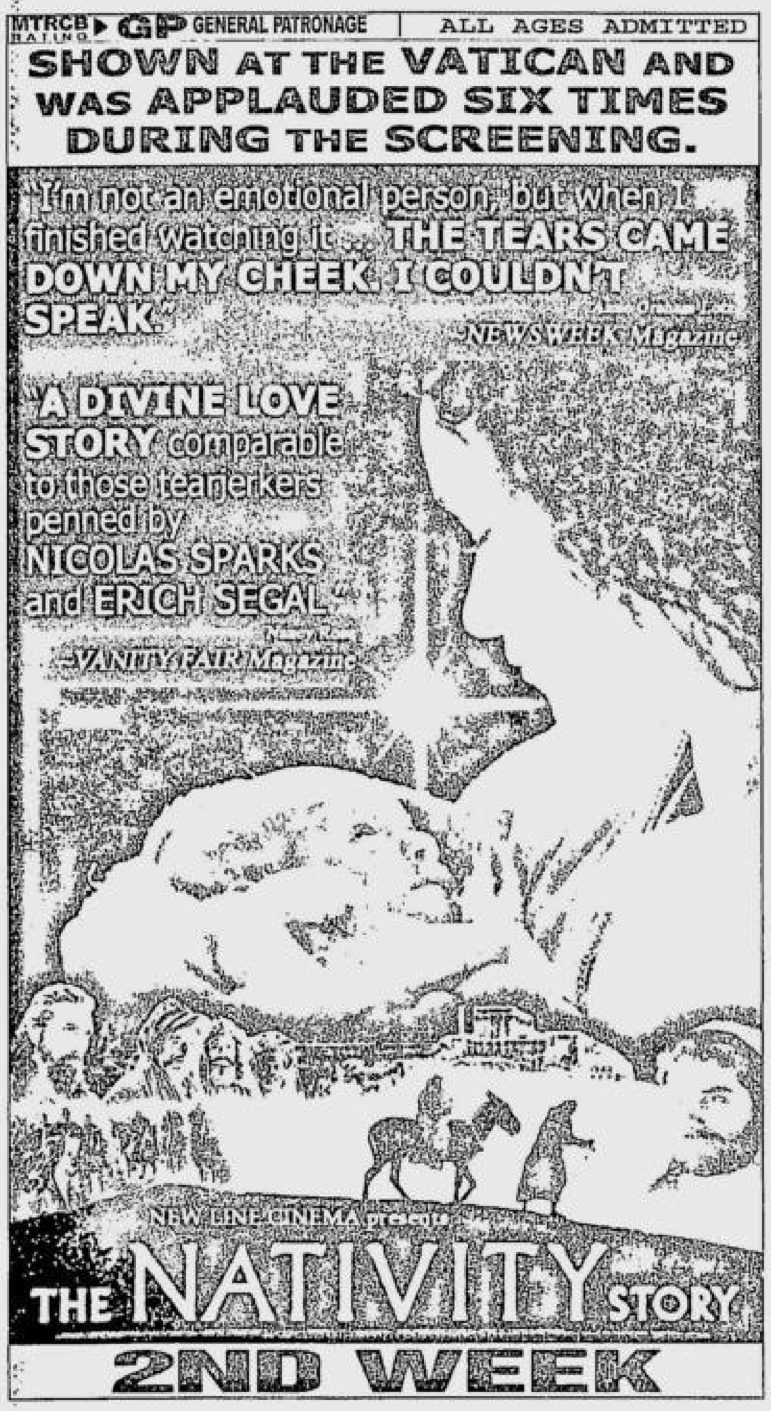
Directed by Liam Lynch

This big-screen spin-off from a short-lived HBO series retells the "fanciful biography" of metal-folk rockers (Black and Gass) who've proclaimed themselves "the greatest band on earth." Stephen Holden of New York Times thinks "it's a garish mess … But it has enough jokes to keep you smiling." John Defore of Hollywood Reporter comments that it "isn't as fresh or weird as the short films that made Tenacious D cult heroes but does capture enough of their spirit to please fans. [But] the theatrical draw isn't likely to extend far beyond the already-converted." John Anderson of Newsday observes that "the appeal of Black has reached saturation level."

Spirit Trap

Stars Billie Piper,

OPENING/F2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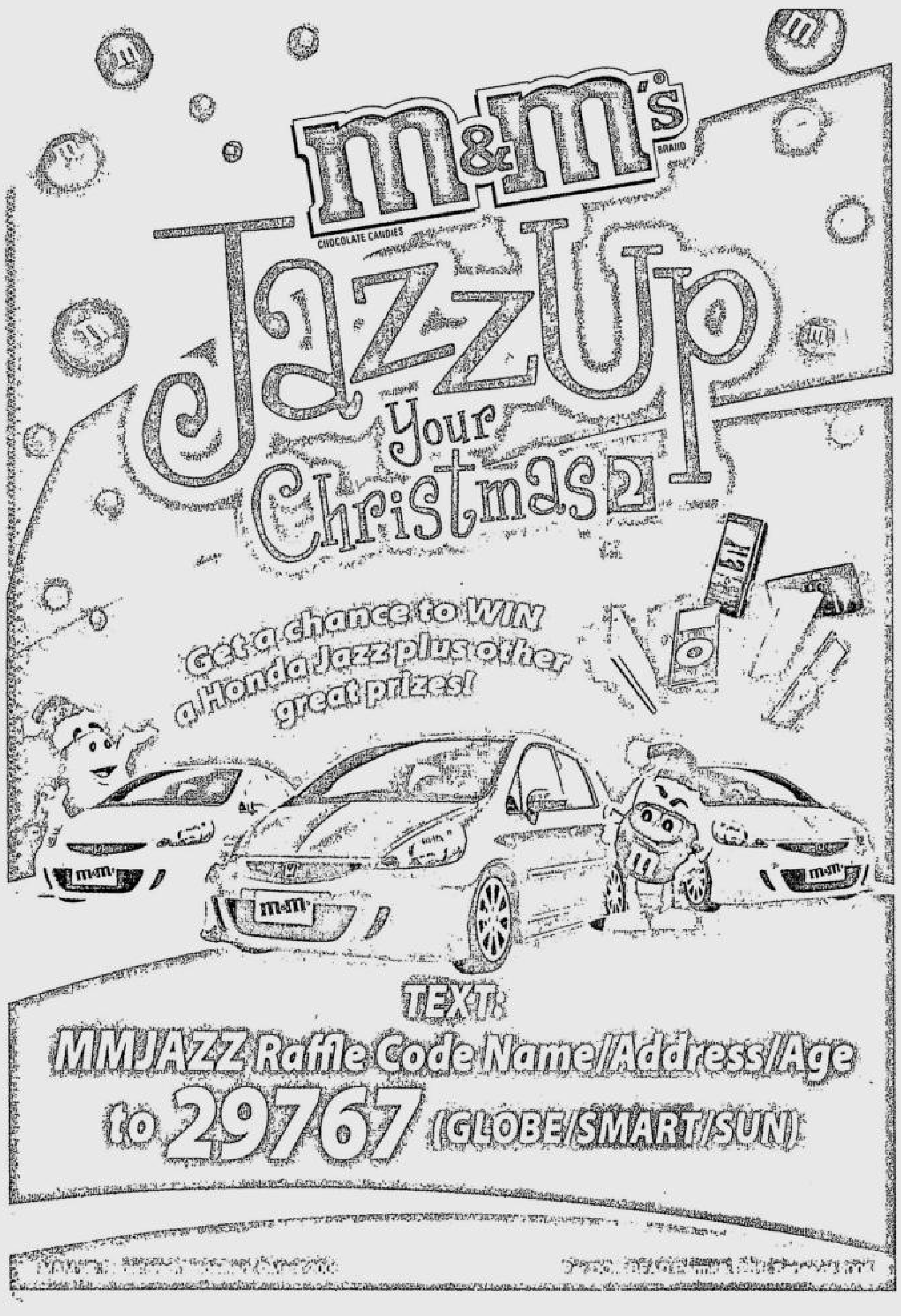
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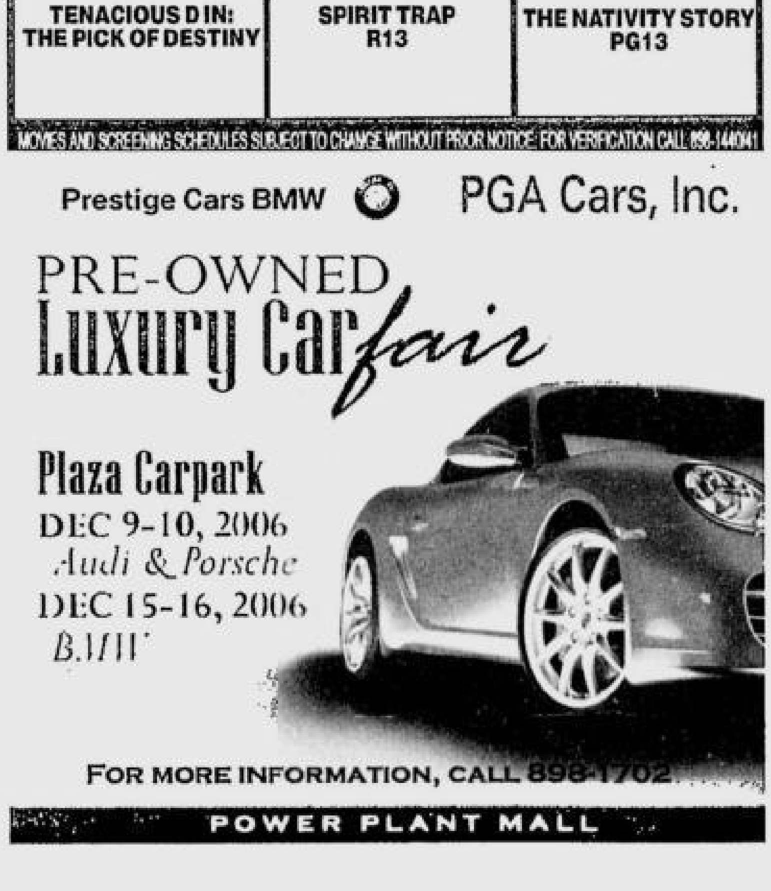
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Finally, 'Cogon' debuts in RP

Rico Maria Ilarde's digital movie is home after over a year in the int'l circuit

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

AFTER ALMOST A YEAR AND A HALF IN THE international festival circuit, Rico Maria Ilarde's digital movie "Sa Ilalim ng Cogon" finally begins its Philippine run on Dec. 13 at the Robinsons Galleria Indiesine Cinema 8, with the help of the Independent Filmmakers Cooperative (IFC).

Why the belated debut?

"We wanted to see how we'd do in the festival scene abroad," Ilarde explained. "We knew we had a slightly offbeat film, so we thought it prudent to try and build its international rep first."

And build it, he did.

"Cogon," which had screenings in Luxembourg, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and Korea, won the Best International Feature at the Buenos Aires Rojo Sangre horror/fantastic film festival in Argentina last year.

Ilarde, however, maintains very "humble hopes" for his small indie film. "We need to pay our investors back," he said.

Next up for him is a thriller entitled "Altar." So far, he volunteered, there are no takers from among mainstream producers. "But I'd still work with Mother Lily Monteverde (of Regal Films who produced his "Aquarium" episode for "Shake, Rattle and Roll 2K5"). She only needs to ask."

What are your thoughts on "Cogon's" run at Indiesine?

It's a chance for the general public to see what the film is all about. Also, we're hoping some of the industry people will take notice.

It takes total commitment to make a film like this on a limited budget. And in 12 days! Then again, I'm not assuming everyone will like it.

What is the significance of Indiesine?

Every filmmaker dreams of the widest release for his film, but often you are limited by the availability of funds, politics and the distribution system already in place.

I straddle the mainstream and independent scenes—I don't intend to reinvent the wheel. I'm too much of a realist.

But I'm a film fan at heart. I want to see different types of films. Imagine a cineplex that shows the latest "Mission Impossible" alongside Lav Diaz's "Batang West Side." The IFC and Robinsons should be commended for this.

How does it feel to be compared by foreign critics to Roger Corman, Gerardo de Leon and Eddie Romero?

It's always flattering to be mentioned alongside the masters. But, ultimately, people see what they want to see in your film even though you never meant it that way. I'm a student of the game. Like a good kung-fu student, I eat my bowl of rice and practice my forms. The masters' classics are always an inspiration. Always. That, and real life.

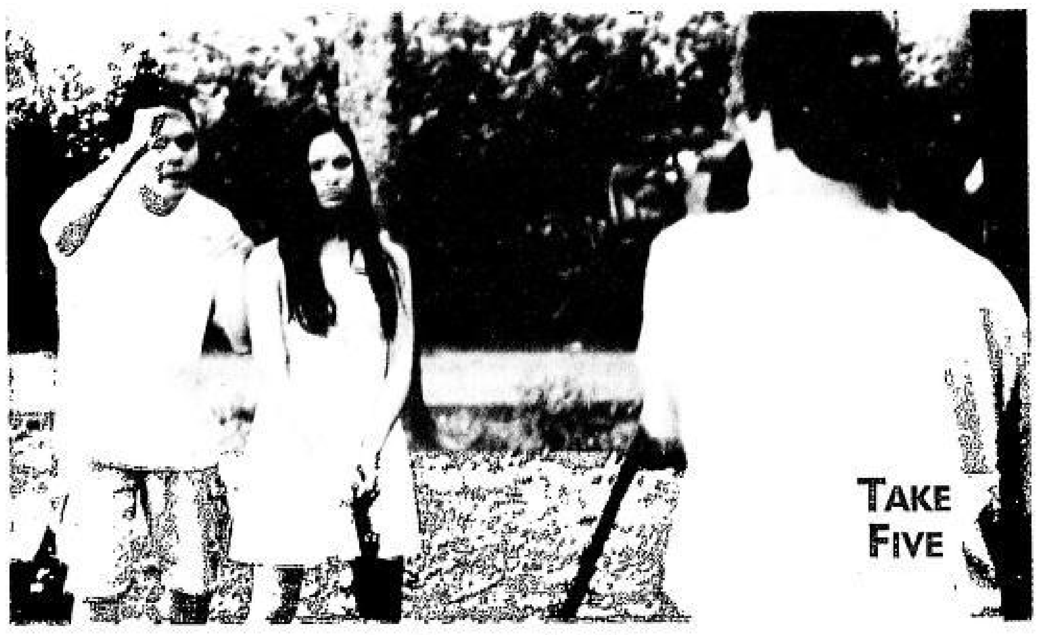
What was your reaction when Pete Tombs, a UK critic, described "Cogon" as a "genre-hopping trip into the unexpected"?

Great! It was meant to be that way. I have such an eclectic grab bag of influences and a lot of them aren't even from the horror genre. I want to show people that these genres aren't exclusive from each other. That the art film and the kung-fu film can coexist side by side.

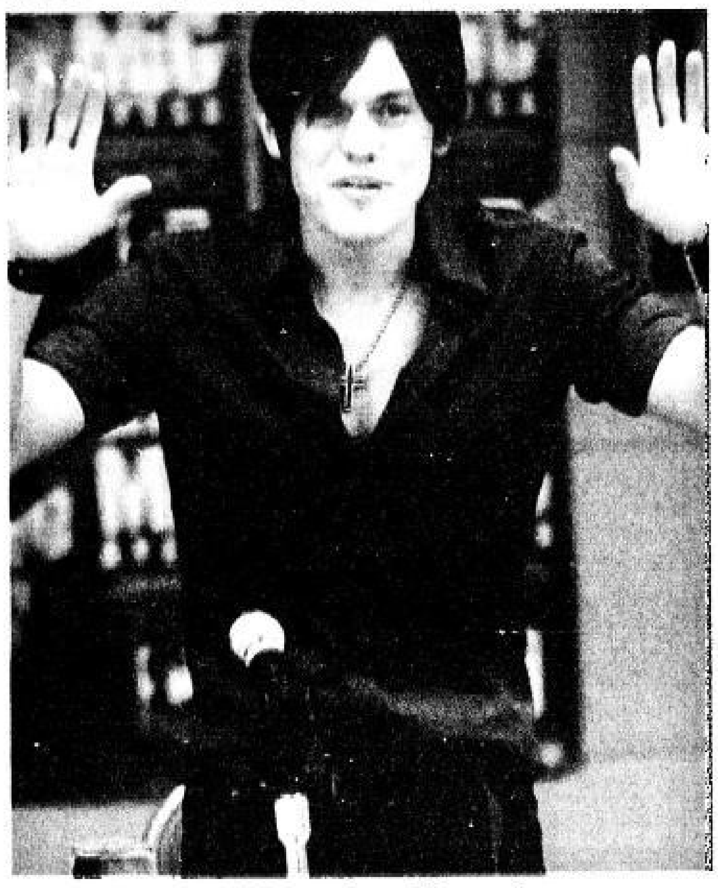
Why are you fascinated with horror/genre films?

They're exciting for me. They can be very, very dramatic. They can also be escapist in the best way and I don't mean that in some disposable fashion.

Someone said that movies are public dreams. That, when the lights come down, it's tantamount to your retina closing and sleep and dream time begin. I've awakened from some dreams crying like a baby. They felt that real. The best movies can bring about the same experience.



RICO Ilarde directs Julia Clarete in a "genre-bending" film.



FIL-AUSSIE rocker MiG Ayesa has a CD out at last. ROMY HOMILLADA

MiG originals have to wait

By Pocholo Concepcion
Contributor

REVIEW

AT SOME POINT IN HIS musical odyssey, MiG Ayesa almost gave up on the idea of becoming a recording artist. He had songs written and ready, but deals would fall through when he was about to get signed.

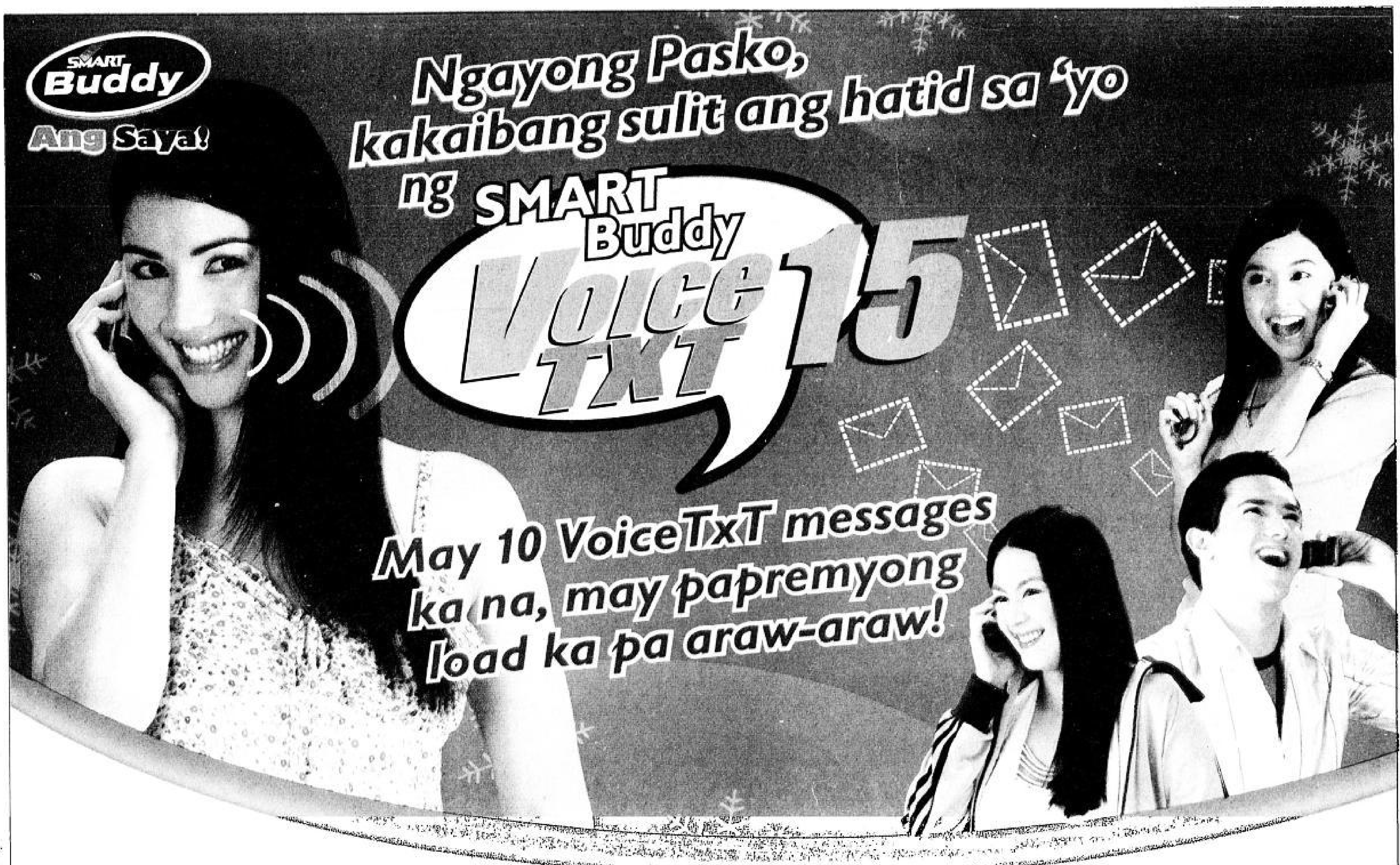
Now he can cast away frustration. Last week, the 36-year-old Fil-Australian's debut CD, "MiG" (Decca/UMG/MCA), was released—apparently the fruit of his high-profile exposure in reality TV talent search, "Rockstar INXS."

But where are the songs he had written? They will have to wait, he explained, because "MiG" is a concept album proposed by the guy responsible for signing him up. The idea was to record rock classics and make them sound fresh. It was most likely a marketing proposition that would introduce MiG Ayesa as a recording artist with minimal business risks.

In any case, listening to the 11 songs in "MiG" should allay fears that he's not worth the tag, "international Filipino rock star." Consider the following reasons:

First, the choice of material.

MIG/ G2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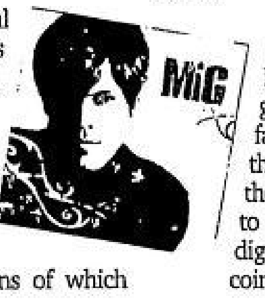
MiG meets local press last week.

MiG originals . . .

From page G1

MiG said the original composers and artists would be proud to hear these covers.

Second, the musical arrangements. MiG's team of producers and arrangers did a near-perfect job of sticking to the concept, thus the songs do sound almost like they had been rewritten. A full orchestra, some sections of which were recorded in London's Abbey Road Studios, is heard on most tracks.



Third, the artist's interpretation. The way MiG gives life to the songs guarantees more fans—perhaps even more than what he refers to as the target age group of 20- to 49-year-old women who dig "mom rock" (a curiously coined term).

To savvy music fan, this might mean rock ballads, soft rock or, in the *jeproks* parlance of Caviteños, "slow rock."

MiG offers earnest and sensitive renditions that give refreshing insights into songs first heard during the British Invasion ("Waterloo Sunset" by the Kinks, "Angie" by the Rolling Stones), the glam-rock era ("Life on Mars" by David Bowie), the rise of singer-songwriters ("Baby, I Love Your Way" featuring composer Peter Frampton on acoustic guitar, "Someone Saved My Life Tonight" by Elton John), '80s new wave ("Wrapped Around Your Finger" by the Police), '90s grunge ("Jeremy" by Pearl Jam). Plus rarely covered gems like "Can't Find My Way Home" by Steve Winwood (as a member of Blind Faith with Eric Clapton), Queen's "Who Wants To Live Forever," Creedence Clearwater Revival's "Have You Ever Seen the Rain" (recently covered, too, by Rod Stewart), and Seal's "Kiss From A Rose."

Like fine poetry

One is bound to rediscover the beauty of rock as thoughtful observations on human nature written in straight honest or highly imaginative narrative styles. Turn the volume high or low—either way, the lyrics will stick like fine poetry.

MiG's vocals are exceptionally great in "Life on Mars" and "Waterloo Sunset." In "Jeremy," he goes all out in improvising—shouting ad libs towards the end of the track.

A bit of unpleasant feeling, though, occurs in a few cuts where MiG sounds like he's overstretching his naturally high-pitched voice.

Otherwise, this is a good introduction that heightens expectations for the follow-up album.

WEEKEND BOX OFFICE

Top 10 movies at the North American box-office for the three-day weekend beginning Dec 8

Apocalypto - Touchstone Pictures

TW	LW	Title	Gross	WR
1	☆	Apocalypto	$14.2 mln	1
2	☆	The Holiday	$13.5 mln	1
3	1	Happy Feet	$12.7 mln	4
4	2	Casino Royale	$8.8 mln	4
5	☆	Blood Diamond	$8.5 mln	1
6	☆	Unaccompanied Minors	$6.2 mln	1
7	3	Deja Vu	$6.1 mln	3
8	4	The Nativity Story	$5.6 mln	2
9	5	Deck the Halls	$3.9 mln	3
10	6	The Santa Clause 3	$3.3 mln	6

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THE NATIVITY 12:10 / 2:30 / 4:50 / 7:10 / 9:30	PINK FESTIVAL 6:00 P.M. - 10:30 P.M.	HAPPY FEET 12:10 / 2:30 / 4:50 / 7:10 / 9:30	
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Ali MALL 5

4	5	6
SPIRIT TRAP 1:20 / 3:40 / 6:00 / 8:20	CASINO ROYALE 12:00 / 2:50 / 5:40 / 8:30	TENACIOUS 'D' 1:20 / 3:40 / 6:00 / 8:20
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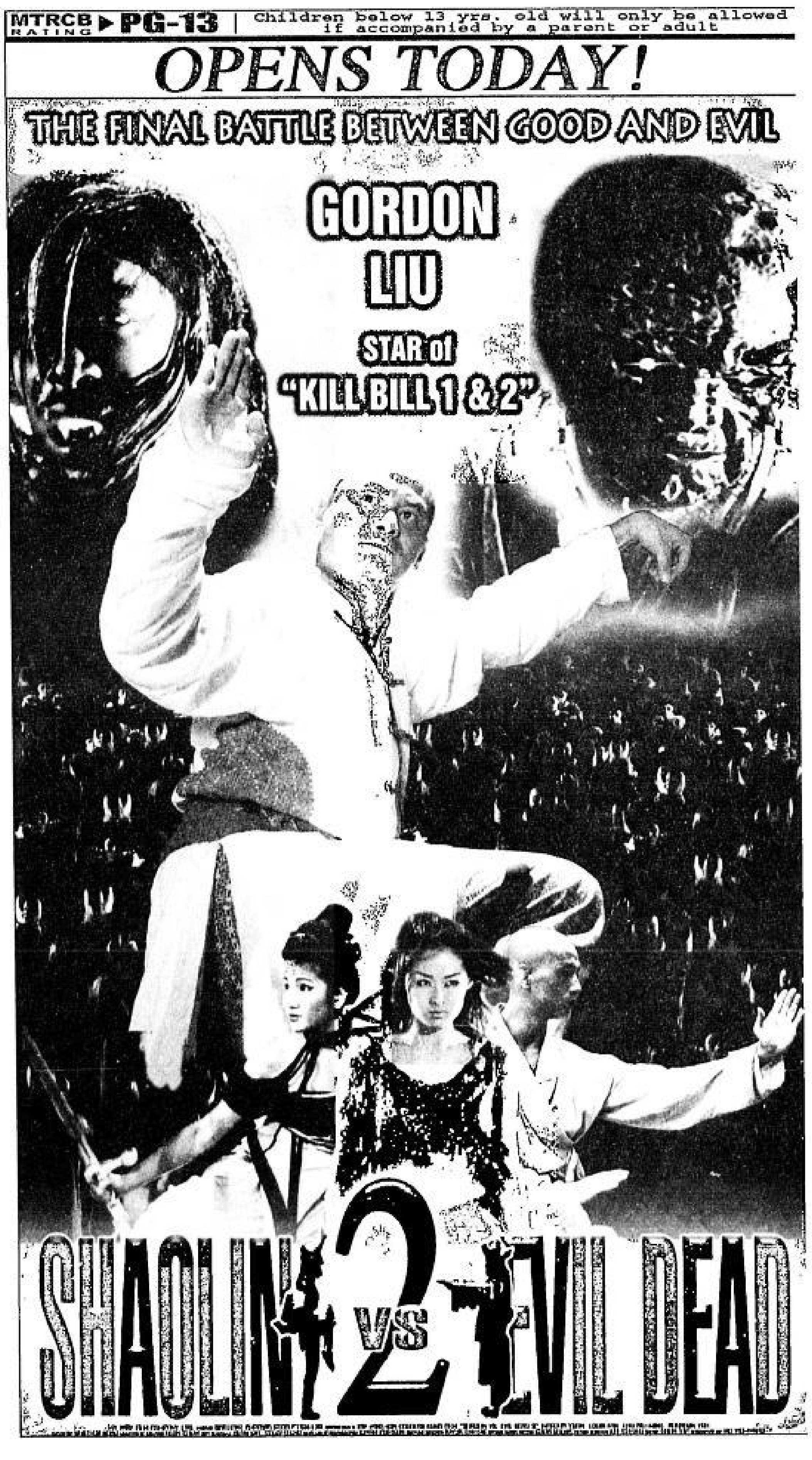
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③ HAPPY FEET
MTRCB GP
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④ CASINO ROYALE
MTRCB PG-13 12 55, 7:00
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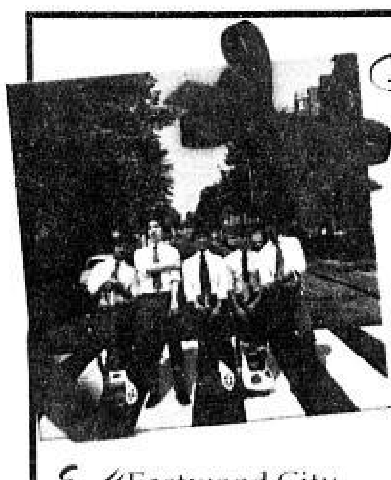

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2 HAPPY FEET
1:05, 3:36, 6:05, 8:35, 11:00
G

3 CASINO ROYAL
1:10, 4:20, 7:30, 10:40
PG-13

4 A GOOD YEAR
2:55, 5:40, 8:25, 11:00
PG-13

ROUNDUP

'Curiosity of Chance'

CEBU—A BIGFOOT Entertainment (BFE) film edited in BFE's facilities, "The Curiosity of Chance," won the Best New Director trophy on Oct. 22 for director Russell P. Marleau at the Seattle Lesbian and Gay Film Festival.

The film stars Tad Hilgenbrinck, Brett Chukerman and Chris Mulkey.

Set in the 1980s, it tells the story of Chance Marquis, an openly gay, eccentric high school sophomore who recruits a bizarre circle of friends—two oddball outcasts, a straight jock he's crushing on and a drag queen.

With their help, Chance brings down the homophobic bully threatening his would-be peaceful, high school existence.

Prince at Super Bowl

LOS ANGELES—Funk rock veteran Prince will perform during the half-time show at the Super Bowl in February.

The slot during the most-watched television show in the United States has come under scrutiny since Janet Jackson's breast-baring "wardrobe malfunction" in 2004 led to sharply higher fines for broadcast indecency. *Reuters*

Grammy error

LOS ANGELES—Movie composer John Williams earned four Grammy nominations, not five as organizers originally announced this week, a spokesperson for the music industry's awards said on Saturday.

Williams, who already has 18 Grammy statuettes dating back to 1976 for his work on "Jaws," will compete against himself in two categories: score soundtrack album and instrumental composition, for the films "Munich" and "Memoirs of a Geisha." *Reuters*

Red carpet for 'Bobby'

DUBAI—Hollywood, Bollywood and Arab stars descended on Dubai on Sunday for the start of a film festival that sees itself as a cultural bridge between the West and the Arab world.

Gracing the red carpet for Dubai's third international festival were the stars of opening film "Bobby," about the 1968 assassination of US presidential hopeful Robert Kennedy. *Reuters*

'Iwo Jima' in japan

TOKYO—Hiromasa Murakami went to see Clint Eastwood's "Letters from Iwo Jima" to find out if an American could tell the Japanese side of a battle that became a symbol of US patriotism, but for Japan was a bitter memory of defeat.

After viewing the film on Saturday when it opened in Tokyo, Murakami thinks Eastwood got it right. *Reuters*

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1 CASINO ROYALE • THX
2 HAPPY FEET
3 TENACIOUS D
4 SPIRIT TRAP
5 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2
6 SA ILALIM NG COGON
7 KAMA SUTRA 3
8 BORAT
9 THE NATIVITY STORY
10 REYNA

ERMITA 536-7809 to 12

1 HAPPY FEET
2 KAMA SUTRA 3
3 SPIRIT TRAP
4 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2
5 THE NATIVITY STORY
6 TENACIOUS D
7 CASINO ROYALE

METRO EAST 682-8193 • 682-8199

1 CASINO ROYALE
2 HAPPY FEET
3 KAMA SUTRA 3
4 TENACIOUS D
5 SPIRIT TRAP
6 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD
7 THE NATIVITY STORY
8 REYNA

NOVALICHES 935-3231 / 935-3229-30

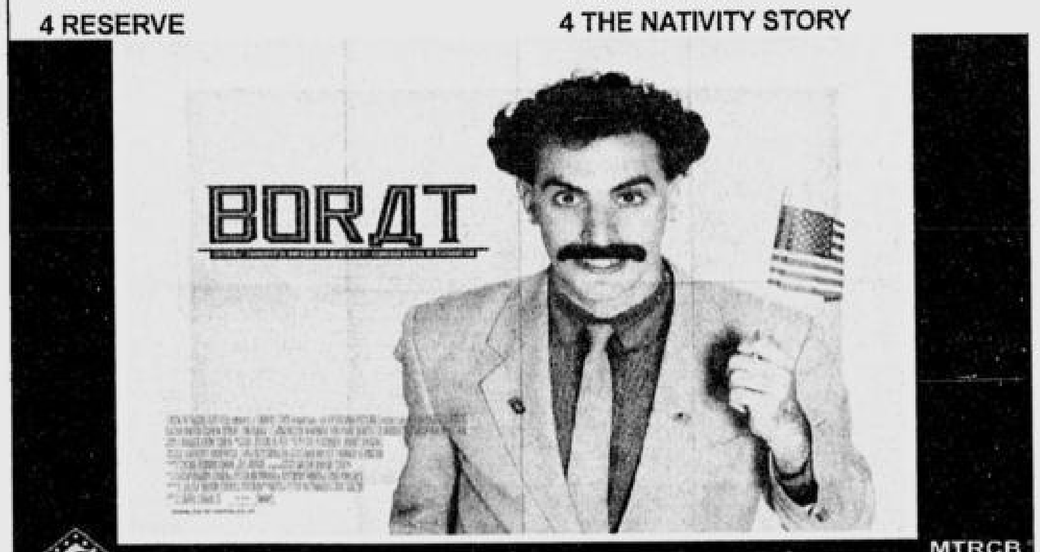
1 CASINO ROYALE
2 HAPPY FEET
3 KAMA SUTRA 3
4 REYNA

CITISQUARE MALABON 288-2575

1 ANG PAMANA:THE INHERITANCE
2 REYNA
3 RESERVE
4 RESERVE

PIONEER 687-5378

1 TENACIOUS D
2 SPIRIT TRAP
3 HAPPY FEET
4 THE NATIVITY STORY



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1 SANTA CLAUSE 3
2 HAPPY FEET
3 FRAGILE
4 MEE-SHEE
5 THE RETURN

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1 BARNYARD
2 A GOOD YEAR
3 THE RETURN
4 FRAGILE
5 MEE-SHEE

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1 THE MARINE
2 ZU WARRIORS
3 MEE-SHEE
4 THE RETURN

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1 BOA
2 HAPPY FEET
3 MEE-SHEE
4 FRAGILE

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1 THE MARINE
2 THE RETURN
3 HAPPY FEET
4 THE NATIVITY STORY
5 REYNA
6 MEE-SHEE

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1 BARNYARD
2 FRAGILE
3 REYNA
4 THE NATIVITY STORY
5 SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS
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2 MEE-SHEE
3 FRAGILE
4 HAPPY FEET

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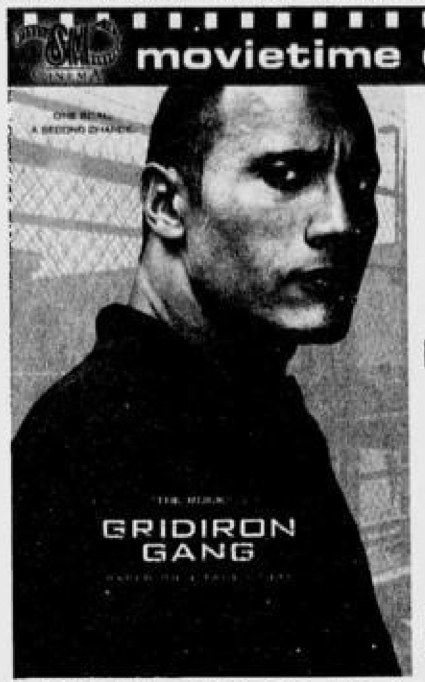
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THE ROCK
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8 SPIRIT TRAP
9 WAG KANG LILINGON
10 REYNA
11 SHAOLIN vs EVIL DEAD
12 CASINO ROYALE

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2 TENACIOUS D
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4 BARCELONA
5 HAPPY FEET
6 CASINO ROYALE
7 WAG KANG LILINGON
8 THE NATIVITY
9 REYNA
10 THE RETURN
11 FRAGILE
12 INANG YAYA

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1 BARCELONA
2 TENACIOUS D
3 FRAGILE
4 CASINO ROYALE
5 WAG KANG LILINGON
6 REYNA
7 HAPPY FEET
8 INANG YAYA
9 THE RETURN
10 SPIRIT TRAP
11 SHAOLIN vs EVIL DEAD
12 THE NATIVITY

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1 AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH
2 HAPPY FEET
3 CASINO ROYALE
4 BARCELONA
5 WAG KANG LILINGON
6 SHAOLIN vs EVIL DEAD
7 THE NATIVITY
8 INANG YAYA
9 REYNA
10 TENACIOUS D

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1 HAPPY FEET
2 AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH
3 TENACIOUS D
4 BARCELONA
5 THE NATIVITY
6 WAG KANG LILINGON

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1 THE NATIVITY
2 TENACIOUS D
3 SHAOLIN vs EVIL DEAD
4 HAPPY FEET
5 SPIRIT TRAP
6 CASINO ROYALE
7 REYNA
8 WAG KANG LILINGON
9 BARCELONA

SM CITY BICUTAN 776-3055

1 THE NATIVITY
2 SHAOLIN vs EVIL DEAD
3 REYNA
4 HAPPY FEET

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1 TENACIOUS D
2 SPIRIT TRAP
3 THE NATIVITY
4 FRAGILE
5 HAPPY FEET
6 CASINO ROYALE
7 SHAOLIN vs EVIL DEAD
8 BARCELONA
9 WAG KANG LILINGON
10 REYNA
11 THE RETURN
12 INANG YAYA

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1 A GOOD YEAR
2 THE RETURN
3 FEAST
4 SANTA CLAUSE 3

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1 HAPPY FEET
2 THE RETURN
3 REYNA
4 DECK THE HALLS

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3 REYNA
4 HAPPY FEET

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7 TENACIOUS D
8 HAPPY FEET

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2 ANG PAMANA
3 THE RETURN
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1 HAPPY FEET
2 SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS
3 REYNA
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3 THE MARINE
4 BARCELONA
5 MEE-SHEE
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1 STEP UP
2 HAPPY FEET
3 THE RETURN
4 SANTA CLAUISE 3

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1 THE MARINE
2 REYNA
3 BOA
4 WAG KANG LILINGON

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2 BOA
3 HAPPY FEET
4 ANG PAMANA

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3 SPIRIT TRAP
4 A GOD YEAR

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3 SANTA CLAUISE 3
4 HAPPY FEET

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2 MEE-SHEE
3 CASINO ROYALE
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6 DECK THE HALLS
7 FRAGILE
8 BOA

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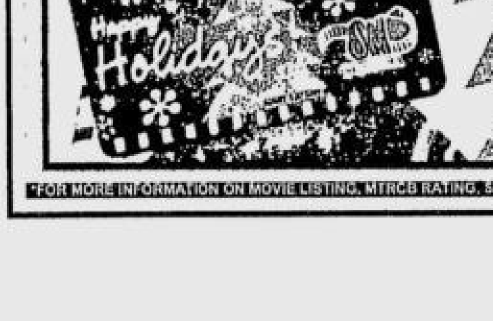

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IN THE END, they cheered the loudest.

RUDY ESPERAS

FINALISTS Ken Dingle, Pow Chavez, Reymond Sajor, Drae Ybañez

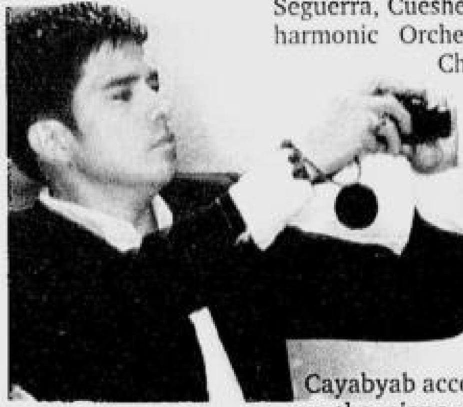
PILITA CORRALES with the Final 3—(from left) Jan Nieto, Gian Carlo Magdangal, Mau Marcelo

Victory for the 'yellow' people

RP'S FIRST "Idol" performs with Ryan Cayabyab at the piano. At right is finalist Miguel Mendoza.

AIZA Seguerra, guest performer

JOYCE Jimenez in the audience



FRANCIS Magalona

By Marinel R. Cruz
Photos by Rudy Esperas

FANS OF THE "PHILIPPINE IDOL" BIG 3—Maureen Marcelo, Gian Carlo Magdangal and Jan Kurt Nieto—had devised a color-coding scheme to better make their presence felt: Wear something orange if you're rooting for Gian; yellow, for Mau; and blue, for Jan.

Last weekend, thousands of fans carrying banners, ribbons and balloons trooped to the Araneta Coliseum in Quezon City to cheer for their favorites during the competition's two-day grand finale, "Big 3 at the Big Dome."

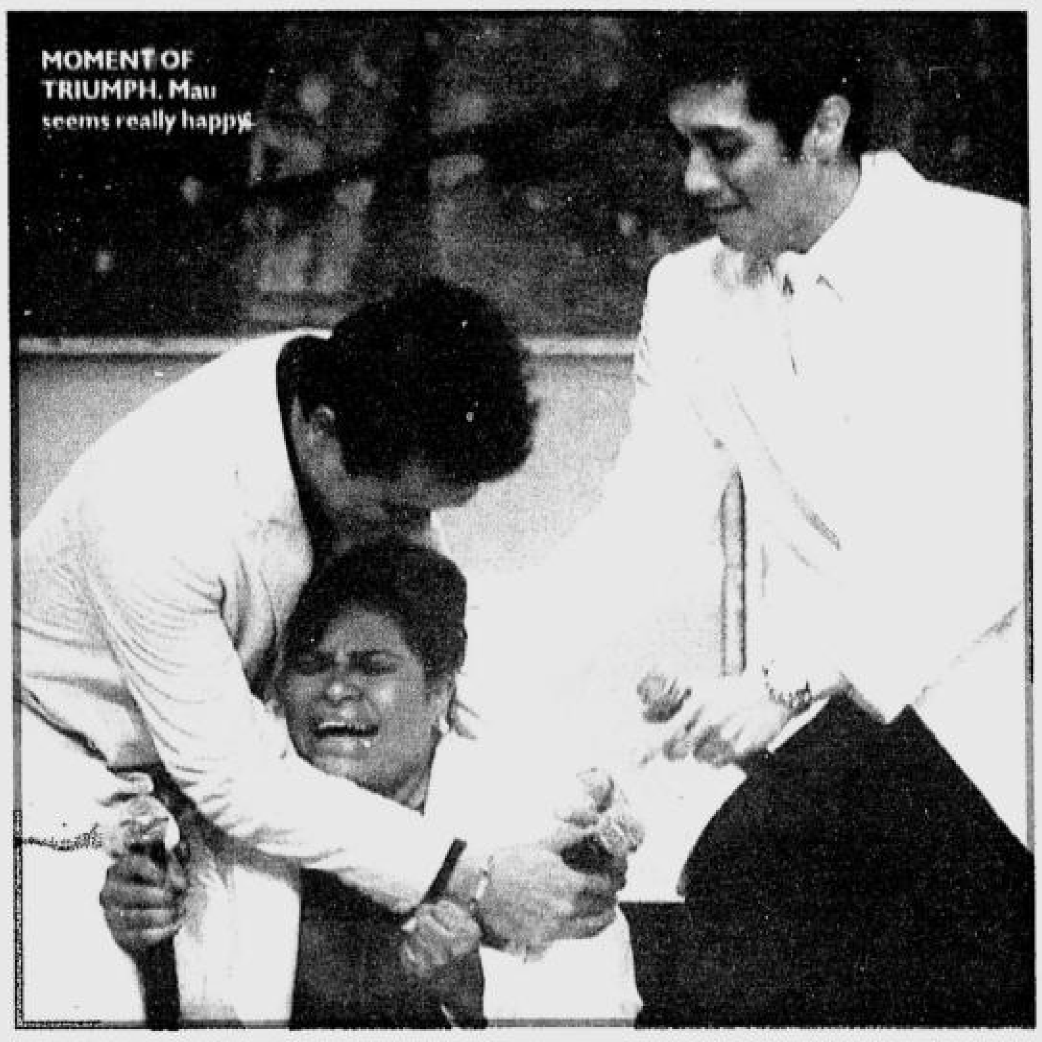
The singing talent search program was co-produced by ABC 5 and the UK-based Free-Mantle Media.

In the end, it was Mau's fans who cheered the most. She was proclaimed first "Philippine Idol," bagging a recording deal with Sony-BMG records, a talent management contracts with ABC 5 and FreeMantle and P1 million in cash. Gian and Jan each received a cash prize of P250,000 from ABC 5.

Show biz personalities Richard Gomez, Lucy Torres, Joyce Jimenez, Sheree, Donita Rose and Gretchen Barretto were spotted at the Big Dome. Gretchen turned up with partner Antonio "Tonyboy" Cojuangco and their teenage daughter Dominique. Tonyboy is president of ABC 5.

Gary Valenciano, Hajji Alejandro, Aiza Seguerra, Cueshé, G Tongi, San Miguel Philharmonic Orchestra, San Miguel Master Choral and the Sexbomb Dancers performed with the Top 12 "Idol" finalists on Sunday (proclamation) night. Cueshé sang the show's "exit theme" titled "Borrowed Time."

"Idol" judges Pilita Corrales and Francis Magalona sang with the finalists, too. Ryan Cayabyab accompanied Miguel Mendoza on the piano as the latter sang "Here I Am," their collaboration.



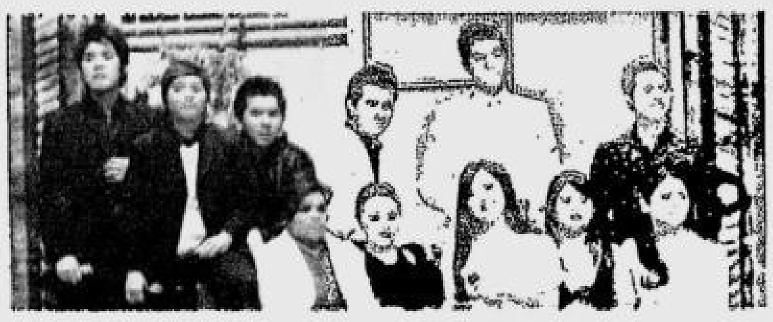
MOMENT OF TRIUMPH. Mau seems really happy.

POW CHAVEZ

JAN NIETO

The night before, Filipino-Australian MiG Ayesa, finalist in Fox's talent search show "Rockstar INXS," sent Gian, his fan, a videotaped message: "You're a good singer. Just relax and enjoy your every performance." Multi-awarded singers Dulce and Martin Nievera, in two separate videos, also gave Mau and Jan pieces of advice.

The "Idol" franchise, which originated in the UK, is aired in 35 countries. The sixth season of the phenomenally popular "American Idol" will air on ABC 5 starting Jan. 17.



CLASS PICTURE. "Philippine Idol" finalists, first batch.

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20th CENTURY FOX glorietta GREENBELT

A rainbow-colored festival

By Oliver M. Pulumbarit
Contributor

REVIEW

SHORT FILMS ABOUT FACETS OF gay culture and experiences are currently being screened at different Metro Manila theaters, exclusive to the Pink Film Festival 2006, an event organized by the Mowelfund Film Institute. Four shorts, along with the full-length "Jupit," are scheduled for viewing at Gateway cinema, Metropolis Alabang, and Starmall, from Dec. 12 (yesterday) to 16. They're not showing at all three venues simultaneously, so check with each theater first for scheduling information.

Colorful, witty

The local 20-minute comedy "Gee-Gee at Waterina," starring Paulo Cabanero and Lou Veloso as a politician and a World War II "comfort gay," respectively, is a colorful, witty dissection of two friends' complementing views on homosexual life. Directed by Mariami Tanangco from J. Dennis Teodosio's screenplay, this feature provides riotous discourses on secret sexual histories and attitudes. Inspired by prominent real-life figures, these characters are a wry, honest and effective pair. The closeted "Konsehal Gee-Gee," who has built a shelter for aging gay people, has helped the reflective drama-drag queen Waterina sell his life story. The amount on the paycheck for the impending big screen treatment, however, isn't quite what the older gay man was expecting ("*Kaunti lang ang zero!*"), but he and his trusted friend soon begin a discussion on how the money would be wisely spent.

Strong, loud dialogue keeps the movie entertaining and accessible, and the actors affectionately give their roles an over-the-top flamboyance that connects with the script. There are brief, funny flashbacks and dream vignettes—the slugfest between Waterina and the "original comfort woman" Nana Rosas (Ermie Concepcion). Other quick jaunts, like Waterina's recollection of being abused before the war, and Gee-Gee's city hall escapade, are likewise hilarious and memorable. The film wonders aloud about accepting one's true nature, but subtly speaks of the unhesitating fellowship between different generations and kinds of gay men.

Ponderous

Another 20-minute film, "Ang Pinakamahabang One Night Stand," directed by Eduardo Roy, Jr., is a serious and occasionally ponderous examination of a gay couple's evolving relationship. Businessman Sam (Gem Cabreros) repeatedly brings home anonymous partners, to his lover Paul's (Venjie Pellena) continued disappointment. But when a hunky stranger, Jigs (Christopher Canesarez), becomes attracted to Paul, the consequences may spell the end to the longtime couple's turbulent relationship.

Swathed in beautiful lighting and a sharp color palette, the visuals are consistent with the film's intended tone. And while some story details, like Sam's undisclosed illness or Jigs' identity, don't really get the attention they deserve, it remains an artistically done piece that gets across important points about complex relationships.

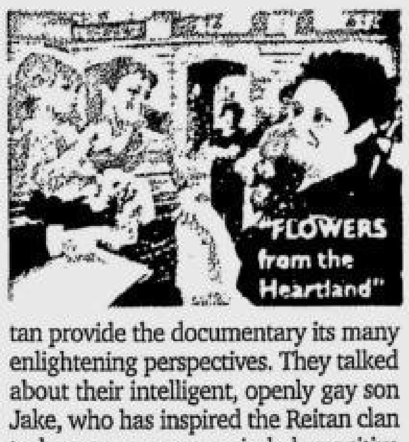
Exploratory

"Out on a Holiday," a 30-minute film directed by Cal Garingan, is a campy but exploratory piece mostly set on campus. The 1998 film is about the hesitant bond between the day-dreaming Jared (Brian Weir) and his crush, Clay (George Ortiz), a friendly, dreamy guy who just broke up with his girlfriend. Clay is what is referred to as a "progressive sexual," and soon enough, predictably finds himself attracted to Jared. "Out on a Holiday" is a hit-and-miss piece especially with its comedy parts, mostly when Jared's Ally McBeal-ish fantasy trio of gay dancers pops up, accompanied by Christmas carols during the most unexpected moments. Still, while it becomes contrived sometimes, it's light and positive enough, and its cutesy scenarios are unapologetically feel-good and optimistic.

Heartwarming

Lastly, "Flowers from the Heartland" by Peter Daulton is, by far, the most heartwarming of the lot. The 25-minute documentary is an informative, well-paced chronicling of the bouquet donation drive in Feb. 2004, when the City and County of San Francisco issued marriage licenses to same-sex couples. While waiting in line, gay American couples received flowers, often arranged as bouquets and given by strangers through gay-friendly florists, via orders placed through the Internet and other means. Real gay men and women from all walks of life who wanted recognition of their committed relationships were pleasantly surprised at the generosity of these well-wishers from all over the US.

The San Francisco City Hall had became an accepting haven for over four thousand pairs in the limited time that such unions were allowed there. Interviews with flower-senders such as straight couple Philip and Randi Reitan provide the documentary its many enlightening perspectives. They talked about their intelligent, openly gay son Jake, who has inspired the Reitan clan to become an open-minded, sensitive family. Actual exchanges of vows were also included. A lesbian couple, while carrying their young kids and their flowers, tied the knot, one of the many powerful and heartfelt images that make "Flowers from the Heartland" truly memorable and important. Despite different factors that continue to challenge homosexuals and same-sex relationships, the film convincingly shows that there are many who believe that they have every right to declare their devotion and commitment to their chosen life partners.



"FLOWERS from the Heartland"